CHURCH COUNCILS AND THEIR DECREES

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BY

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PREFACE

THE title of this book involves no discussion as to the rightful application of the terms 'General' or 'Œcumenical' to any of the Councils of the Christian Church. But, for that reason, it may seem the more desirable to take note of the fact that three great branches of the Church, namely, the Greek, the Roman, and the Anglican, differ widely from one another in their recognition of the authority actually attaching to the decisions of such assemblies.

By the adherents of the Greek Church seven Councils are accepted as General; the last of these being what is known as the Second Council of Nice, A.D. 787, which restored to the Churches 'beside the figure of the cross, the relics of saints, and their images'; and this, it was further declared, 'because those paintings recall to us the memory of the originals, and make us participate in their sanctity.'

After the great schism between the Eastern and Western Churches, brought about (A.D. 1054) by dissension on the question of the Procession

of the Holy Ghost, we cannot expect to find any identity of view between the Greek and Roman communions, as to the character and authority of Church Councils.

With the high demands of the Church of Rome students of religious history are familiar. When the Western Empire, which had its seat in Rome, fell to pieces, the Emperor's place was filled by the Pope. In virtue of such succession, the Pope asserted his right to summon General Councils, whilst his claim to be the successor of the Apostle Peter, and head of the whole Church, lent added importance to his position and action.

The Roman Catholic Church, therefore, loyally and persistently asserts the œcumenical character of all Councils so summoned by the Pope.

It yet remains to indicate the opinion held by the English Reformers on this question, which is well and clearly set forth in the Twenty-first Article of the Church of England.

It would be difficult to find stronger evidence of regard, on the part of the English clergy, for the position and judgment of the laity, touching these serious matters, than is afforded by the Article in question.

The first thought which finds expression from the framers of this statement is that 'General Councils may not be gathered together without the commandment and will of Princes.' It will be seen, therefore, that the Anglican Church de-

clares that the right of summoning any Council that is to be regarded as 'General,' depends upon the civil, and not on the ecclesiastical power only. That is the test which she applies to the authority of bygone Councils, and declaring, by the testimony of history, that only six Councils were so summoned in the earlier ages of the Christian Church, she holds that these alone can be called 'General,' and that the very last of them that could be recognized as such was the Third Council of Constantinople, which assembled there, A.D. 680.

Nor is it possible to ignore the plain common sense, which underlies the estimate of these Councils formed by the Church of England. 'And when they be gathered together,' we further read in this same Article, 'forasmuch as they be an assembly of men, where all be not governed with the Spirit and Word of God, they may err, and sometimes have erred, even in things pertaining unto God.'

It is in cordial recognition of the truth and spirit of such wise words that these passages of religious history should be remembered.

A. N. B.

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I

THE COUNCIL OF JERUSALEM, A.D. 45

THE first advance of Christianity across the borders of Judaism, and the method of its appeal to Gentile thought and life, could not fail to arouse much anxious thought, and grave differences of opinion among its earliest adherents.

It is well to bear in mind the passionate devotion of the Jew to the commandments and traditions of the Law that came by Moses; for it must be admitted that the first followers of Jesus earnestly strove to show that they had not ceased to participate in that feeling. Their unwillingness to cut themselves off from the old Hebrew faith, in which they had been born and nurtured, can be readily appreciated. Such a sentiment on their part was only intensified by the abiding recollection of the Master's declaration that he had come to destroy neither the obligations of the Law, nor the teachings of the prophets. It was to be expected, too, that they would bear faithfully in mind words attributed to Jesus himself, bidding

his disciples to address their message neither to the Gentiles, nor even to the Samaritans, but 'rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.' And, if tradition is to be further trusted, the spirit of patriotism that moved Jesus to weep over the sorrows that threatened Jerusalem, was no less answerable for the thought that it was wrong to take the children's bread and to cast it to the dogs, that there was a blessing peculiarly reserved for his beloved nation, and that salvation was of the Jews who knew what they worshipped.

And when we find them, as in the case of Peter, of Stephen, and even of Paul himself, endeavouring most sincerely to justify their position by references to Hebrew history, and scripture, we cannot fail to note the strong parallelism to the act of the Master himself, who, as the old tradition ran, 'beginning at Moses and all the prophets,' 'expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.'

Such considerations as these are simply essential to a just estimate of the serious controversy which necessitated the first Council, or perhaps it may be more correctly called the first Conference, of the members of the Christian community in the city of Jerusalem; the first utterances and aspirations of the earliest advocates of Christianity, after the death of Jesus, being distinctly Judaic, both in tone and in direction.

For a while then, the new faith was regarded as holding a secure resting-place within the limits of Israel. To the disciples, the treasure, to use the simile of the Apostle Paul, was committed in 'earthen vessels.' In the clash of controversy, consequent upon the growing acceptance of Christianity, the vessels indeed were broken, but the treasure was set free from the limitations upon which alone its first custodians sincerely believed its enjoyment to be possible at all. Sooner or later the spirit of that faith would very naturally overleap the barriers, behind which diverse faiths and peoples sheltered themselves. The Jews themselves were not untouched by the influences of the great Gentile world round about them. Out of the land of Palestine many a son of Israel had fared forth to the seats of ancient commerce and learning to be found eastward across the wide desert, or westward upon the coasts of the Mediterranean.

These Jews came under the influence of Gentile thought and custom. They forgot the classic language of their forefathers to such a degree that it was needful to translate their sacred writings into Greek; and so it is little to be wondered at that in the New Testament we read of these same Jews under the name of 'Grecians.' They were, in fact, colonials, as distinguished from the Palestinian Jews dwelling in the old seats of Jewish faith. Between these two classes there

were differences which the Jews in Palestine were not slow to impress upon their Hellenistic brethren. It is to be noted that these Jewish residents in foreign lands formed a sure connecting link between the Palestinian Jews and the Gentile world. But though they were characterized by a quenchless zeal for proselytizing, as evidenced by classic writers, they seem to have been regarded by their Palestinian brethren as wanting in regard to the strictest observance of ritual and of the law. And it is noteworthy to find an echo of such a difference in the early experiences of the Christian faith, when Christian converts, gathered from amongst the same foreign, Hellenistic Jews, complained that they were neglected in the daily ministration; in other words, that the common fund for the relief and support of the poorer brethren was not impartially administered as between the converts from the Palestinian Jews and themselves.

Moreover, Christianity was beginning to address itself to others than to Jews. It had entered among the Samaritans, for to them its appeal found expression by the preaching of Peter, and also by that of Philip. The message, doubtless, was faithfully delivered, but the conditions on which its promised blessings might be enjoyed had not come up for consideration.

But the new faith was a living one; it was an impossibility to arrest its forward step; and as

with ever firmer impress it touched the life of the outside world, it found itself confronted with demands and conditions of which its Apostolic advocates had, at first, but an inadequate conception. The stream of faith was surely gathering way and volume; momentous for the world was the question of its right direction, and well was it for Christianity that the fearless spirit of the Apostle Paul was at hand. What feelings the death of the self-devoted Stephen called up within the soul of Paul, we can but imagine; but our estimate of the change within him, typified by his subjective experience upon the Damascus road, should surely be as reverent as it is sympathetic. But the change is wrought: he stands before his fellows, no longer the persecutor of the new faith, but its champion, destined to be its deliverer, too, from the cerements of old tradition and impracticable conditions, amid which, but for his words and efforts, that faith might have found that its cradle had become its sepulchre.

By the missionary labours of Paul, then, the disciples in Jerusalem, under the leadership of James, 'the brother of the Lord,' together with Peter and John, are brought face to face with the spread of the gospel among the Gentiles; and this, it must be remarked, less than a score of years after the death of Jesus. How devoted the Christians in Jerusalem were to the faith and ritual of their Hebrew forefathers, we are well

aware; but, the preaching of Paul at Antioch, and the success of his labours, evidenced by the large number of his converts, of necessity compelled the anxious attention of the Apostles at Jerusalem to the terms on which these Gentiles could be received as Christians. Were these converts to be allowed to pass immediately and freely into the fold of Christ? or was the obligation to be rigidly imposed upon them of first submitting to the Jewish rite of circumcision, against which they revolted? In short, were the churches of Paul's planting to be counted as Christian only on condition that their members had first become Jews? This was the essential issue at stake; and for their further information and satisfaction, the leaders of the Church at Jerusalem had sent down certain representatives —'false brethren,' as Paul did not scruple to call them—to learn and to report upon the general condition, and the feelings of the believers in Antioch.

Great indeed were the issues to the world, which depended on Paul's unflinching attitude. He was confronted with the authority of those who had verily heard Jesus, and had been taught by him; but such a claim, strong as it might be accounted, was met by Paul's assertion that his Christianity was nothing less than the fruit of revelation to his own soul. Without hesitation he follows those brethren who, as he boldly averred, came in among

his friends 'to spy out their liberty, which they had in Christ Jesus, that they might bring them into bondage'; he follows them back to Jerusalem, and then, somewhere about A.D. 45, we find Paul in conference both public and private with the brethren and the leaders of the Church at Jerusalem.

A venerable divine of the Church of England, the Rev. Dr. Jortin, has expressed his belief that this same Council at Jerusalem was the first and the last at which the Holy Spirit may be said to have presided. But it is possible that the aim of such a teacher is similar to that of the author of the Book of Acts, whose kindly purpose—judged at least in the light of Paul's own account of that Conference contained in the second chapter of the Epistle to the Galatians—seems to have been that of laying a healing touch upon a controversy that must have shaken the infant Church to its very foundations. It was not only the question of the imposition of an objectionable Jewish ordinance upon the Church at large, it was the general question of the social relations between the members of that Church, Jew and Gentile together, that demanded the thought and judgment of those responsible for the guidance of the whole religious community.

Must the Gentiles observe the whole Mosaic law? Might Jewish Christians even sit at meat with Christians of Gentile descent? These were

the grave matters of controversy; and for our just apprehension of that Conference what better testimony can we have than the account given by Paul himself to his friends in Galatia? Privately and before the company of believers Paul argued, pleaded, and appealed. Peter had already eaten with Gentile converts, so *that* could only be a source of satisfaction to Paul; and when he pleaded, as he did so warmly, for larger liberty, we can take the true meaning of his utterance to the Galatians to be, 'Not only did they say nothing unfavourable to me but also they pledged themselves to fellowship with me.'

The inference we draw from Paul's narrative is to the effect that debate ran high, that Paul's spirit was indeed stirred within him as he saw the result of all his toil hanging in the balance. He recognized none present as more than fellow-labourers in the service of their common Master, and from them he learned nothing beyond the truth as he appreciated it. Their claims of authority he at once set aside, saying of those who seemed to be somewhat—'whatsoever they were it maketh no matter to me. God accepteth no man's person.'

In brief, Paul's best arguments lay in the facts with which he confronted James and the Judaic Christians. He pointed to the converts made, and to the Churches established. He insisted on

their determination and his own to tolerate no submission to the distinctively Jewish rite, claiming for them a free entrance into Christian fellowship. Before such pleas so resolutely advanced, James, Peter, and all who followed them had no choice but to give way. It is possible, indeed, to regard their decision as savouring rather of acquiescence, than of thorough conviction. Subsequent events showed clearly enough that the position assumed by the Church at Jerusalem was in no way due to the sense of principle involved. Had the decision in Paul's favour been given from that higher ground, the subsequent dispute at Antioch, when Paul withstood Peter to the face, touching the relationship between the Jewish and Gentile converts, would not have occurred. The result of Paul's contention at the Jerusalem Conference seems to have been rather of the nature of a tentative and a temporary arrangement than a definite and deliberate acceptance of a principle of action. The question of the relationship between the Christian convert and the law of Moses was still an open one. Paul's fellow-believers might give a hesitating consent to his resolute demand, but the struggle for the submission of the Gentile to the Jew yet smouldered.

Taking Paul's words to his Galatian converts as reliable, we may rest assured, from our knowledge of Paul's spirit and temperament, that had the reply of the Apostles at Jerusalem been

contrary to Paul's desire, we should have read of their refusal in Paul's subsequent writings; but his silence constrains us to the conclusion, that for the time, at least, Paul was left free to take such a course with his Gentile converts as his reason and conscience commended to him. He took that course, and it issued in freedom for the whole Christian Church.

It is something to note, however, that notwithstanding the feelings and predilections of the Jerusalem Christians no adverse reply was made to Paul's strong appeal. And although in regard to points of ritual observance matters were left undecided, the tacit acceptance of circumstances led, happily, to a very practical issue; and, in the ministrations of the Apostles, the result was a division of labour. To Paul it was agreed that the care of the Gentile churches should be entrusted, the companies of Christians of Jewish extraction and feeling being allotted to Peter and the brethren who shared his views.

That compact, to all seeming, most reasonable and brotherly, must for the time have gladdened the whole Christian community with the promise of concord and mutual understanding in common work. But even that arrangement, eagerly embraced as it must have been, failed to hinder the repeated interference by the Christians of Jewish descent with the churches of the Apostle Paul's planting in Asia Minor. It is true that according

to the narrative in the Book of Acts, the right hand of fellowship was extended by the leaders of the Church in Jerusalem to Paul and his co-workers; but, in the light of Paul's own record, we cannot ignore a serious suggestion from Professor Schmiedel, that 'the right hand of fellowship which they held out to each other was at the same time a parting handshake.'

But amid differences, debates, and doubts, to one Christlike and unselfish purpose all parties in that first Christian conference gave warm and willing heed. There was famine in the land, and to the poverty-stricken brethren in Judea, Paul's Gentile friends, according to their ability, ungrudgingly sent up their succour.

Even in that early day the teachers of the Church might have their differences, real and deep; but the feeding of the hungry, and the outflowing of brotherly sympathy proclaimed that the spirit of Christ was indeed with them. No man, either, was more forward to give that spirit generous expression than the Apostle Paul, who steadfastly witnessed for the largest liberty and the firmest faith, alike in controversy and in service, in life and in death.

II

THE COUNCIL OF NICÆA, A.D. 325

From such knowledge as yet remains to us, touching the proceedings at the first conference of Christians, known in history as the Council of Jerusalem, it is clear that the desire and, indeed, the inflexible purpose of the Apostle Paul was the establishment of a household of faith, wherein Jew and Greek should dwell together as brethren. Slowly but certainly the young church came to make Paul's thought its own. With an ardour unsurpassed in any age, its missionaries went forth, sowing ofttimes in tears, and yet bringing their sheaves home with them, as they led their converts glad and willing captives to the commandments, and to the spirit of the common Master of them all. But this triumph, great as it was, must be largely credited to the labours and to the teachings of the Apostle himself, who surely helped to save Christianity from the peril of lapsing into what would virtually have been another sect among the Jews.

Before another Council of the Church assembled, a long and momentous period intervened.

Centuries passed away after a Church Council's pronouncement on the obligations of Christian life in the middle of the first century, at Jerusalem, and before the authoritative declaration of the leaders of the Church, in regard to Christian doctrine, made in the early years of the fourth century, at the very important and memorable Council which met at the city of Nicæa, in Bithynia.

For we have to bear in mind the fact that from the day when Paul contended for a free welcome for the Gentiles into the Christian fold, unhampered by Judaic rites, the collective and therefore the presumably authoritative voice of the Christian Church, as a Church, is silent for nearly three hundred years.

To help the realization of such a fact, it is as if we heard of a great reformer who, about the middle of the sixteenth century, fearlessly vindicated the law of conscience before the princes and prelates of a seemingly world-wide church. And catching, at intervals, here and there, the individual voices of men, to whom the word Protestant was verily a holy name, we should find them swayed by the same manfulness of soul that Luther knew. We should hear of the doctrines dear to them; we might be told of rulers and of peoples who received their testimony;

but if, after all, we found no council or synod assembling to publish any statement whatever of Protestant doctrine till the middle of the nineteenth century, we should have a parallel to the interval, and to the vicissitudes of the world's life, separating the age of the first Christians from the day when their successors gathered at Nicæa, A.D. 325.

And this fact presents us with matter for further consideration. For, after an interval of three hundred years between the death of the Church's Founder and an authoritative pronouncement of the doctrine held by that Church, surely it is reasonable to ask, whether such a declaration, so long delayed, did set forth with correctness the doctrine which the Founder of that Church really believed and commended to the men of his own day? In the generations following the close of Christ's ministry, the company of his followers numbered others than those who were lightly accounted of by men of knowledge, or of worldly standing.

Christianity by the fact of its growth, and by the manifest constancy of its votaries, makes its appeal to the religious, and compels the attention of the thoughtful.

The merchant, in his journeyings by land and sea, comes face to face with it in province after province of the great Roman Empire. Servants of the Crucified are to be found among the soldiers

of the Emperor. The saints come forth not only from the humbler dwellings, and despised purlieus of the great cities, but they are discovered in the princely houses of the great, and in the midst of the household of Cæsar himself.

As history unrolls its record, the most casual survey prompts the question, not where Christianity is, but where is it not ? It begins to lift its head with growing confidence not only in the seats of pagan power, but in the influential centres of old-world thought and learning. Jerusalem, Antioch, Rome, Athens, and Alexandria are alike familiar with the appeal of the Christian teachers.

The preachers of the cross have been going to and fro among the nations with a steadfast purpose, and an enduring hope to win them every one for the service of their Master. Palestine is no longer the sole abode of the young faith ; it fringes the shores of the Great Sea ; it makes its home in Britain, in Gaul, and in Spain : it advances to the furthest outposts of the Roman rule in the very midst of the legions that make that rule respected.

All this had surely come to pass, but still, apparently, no adequate cause had arisen to demand from the Church, as a corporate body, a declaration of the doctrines held to be at once orthodox and obligatory.

The faith of Christ, it must be remembered, had been long and patiently contending not only

with the world's principalities and powers. It had been not only pleading for the infusion of a nobler and purer spirit into men's daily walk and conversation ; but, of necessity, it had been offering itself to the serious consideration of thoughtful and philosophic minds, Jewish and Gentile alike. The loftier tone of its life, the self-sacrifice it inculcated, and which its adherents admittedly displayed with a constancy that failed them not in dungeon or in amphitheatre, compelled attention to its evident power. Thus did Christianity attract to itself many from the midst of pagan thought and culture, who deserved, more or less, the title of philosophers. The influence of such converts, whether Greeks, Romans, or Asiatics, could not fail to produce a marked effect upon the Christian conception of God, of his attributes, and of his relationship to his creatures. How far Christianity, as generally accepted in the fourth century, is indebted to the contributions of the nations around is a question which has not yet perhaps received a complete reply.

The thoughtful philosopher and the devout Christian apologist could not but exchange ideas upon the nature of the Deity. But as Dr. Martineau says[1] : ' The condition of the world rendered it inevitable that the Hellenic thought should penetrate and win the Hebrew ; impossible

[1] ' Essays,' Vol. ii. p. 323.

that the Hebrew should at all considerably influence the Hellenic.'

And the result was that the attention of the exponents of Christianity became more closely concentrated on matters of speculative opinion, and on points of doctrine, which were increasingly regarded as questions of primary importance to the believer. The Christian religion, therefore, will be seen to absorb into itself conceptions of the Deity somewhat different from those put forth by its first preachers; and from that time to the present day those conceptions have exerted a sure, and a most tenacious influence upon the belief of Christendom, touching the nature and office of Jesus, and his rank, in the hierarchy of being.

Very observable is the difference in regard to the object of Christian worship in the period following the Council of Nicæa, when compared with the direction of that worship in the first two centuries of our era. Among the faithful of that earlier time prayer was addressed to God the Father, through Jesus Christ; but, in the later age, the Christian disciple had learned from his Pagan convert to speak of Christ in different terms from those to which his predecessors had been accustomed.

But contemporary literature affords evidence that to these newer doctrines the early Christians were, at first, strongly, and it may be truly said,

even violently opposed ; the very word ' Trinity ' being a cause of offence to the general body of believers.

For example, Tertullian, writing about the beginning of the third century, clearly reveals his impatience with the Roman Christians for constantly ' bawling out,' to use his own expression, against it. Equally is he disturbed because the Greek Christians remain quite unconvinced by his own elaborate exposition of the doctrine involved in the word.

Christendom is so conversant with the rise and development of the great Arian Controversy, that it will be sufficient here briefly to note the points in its progress which preceded and necessitated the Council of Nicæa.

About the end of the third century Sabellius, Bishop of Cyrene, in Africa, promulgated the idea that the three persons in the Trinity were really no more than three characters of the same Deity. ' His central proposition,' it has been observed, ' was to the effect that Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are the same person, three names thus being attached to one and the same being.' His theology therefore, was essentially monotheistic. In the East, and in Africa, this teaching, known as Sabellianism, gained no little acceptance. But all such doctrine met neither with compromise nor tolerance from Alexander, at that time Bishop of Alexandria. In opposition to it, that prelate

declared 'that the Father did not precede the Son a single moment, and that the Son had issued from all eternity out of the substance of the Father himself.' To that statement a Presbyter in the Alexandrian Church, who was none other than Arius himself, took grave exception, and felt himself impelled to reply. At such opposition the Bishop 'was very angry,' and forthwith commanded Arius to lay aside his heretical views.

Arius met such a mandate with a prompt refusal, and, as a result, a body of one hundred Ecclesiastics, under the presidency of the Bishop of Alexandria, hasten to anathematize and to excommunicate Arius himself, and all who shared his opinions.

Against that action, it is needless to say, that Arius protested and appealed, and thus was commenced the Arian controversy, destined to convulse the Christian world for generations, nor can it be said that the fire it kindled is subdued even yet? What was Christ's nature? That was the question of most tremendous moment in the fourth century, and it is still a question on which men differ strongly, frankly, and irreconcilably. No sooner had the controversy begun than the Eastern Church was the scene of fierce dissensions.

At that time the throne of the Roman world was filled by the first Christian Emperor, Constantine the Great. He had been striving, and

with wonderful success, after unity of Empire, and to his purposes, ' a man of affairs,' as he was, such differences and controversies in the Church must have appeared most inimical.

As the storm of controversy grew in fierceness, and in extent, no man strove to quiet it more earnestly than did Constantine. He could have wished for nothing but peace and progress for the Church, when his empire had been won for him by the swords of his Christian soldiers. Just as he aimed to make his temporal sway one and indivisible, so, in a letter addressed by him to both disputants jointly—to Alexander and to Arius—he made it plain that his great desire was to establish throughout his dominions ' some one definite and complete form of religious worship.'

In the same letter, according to the testimony of the Christian historian, Eusebius, he offers timely and sensible counsel to these controversialists. ' My advice,' he says, ' is neither to ask nor answer questions, which, instead of being scriptural, are the mere sport of idleness, or an exercise of ability ; at best keep them to yourselves, and do not publish them. You agree in fundamentals.'

But the theologian and the statesman could not look at this great question from the same point of view ; and it is little to be wondered at that Constantine's appeal was unheeded.

Discussion waxed fiercer, and nothing remained

but for the Emperor to summon the second Church Council, which met at Nicæa, A.D. 325, attended by three hundred and eighteen Bishops, and opened by the Emperor Constantine in person. By all who wish a graphic picture of that impressive scene recourse may well be had to Dean Stanley's presentment of it, in his history of the Eastern Church. Most interesting is the earnest and manly appeal made by the Emperor to the prelates gathered before him, for forbearance, and for unity of spirit in deliberations fraught with import to all Christendom.

It is difficult to see how the story of this Council can be read by any sincerely religious man without feelings of deep sorrow and regret. Looking back upon the time, a modern writer declares that 'the history of the Church presents to the reader a perpetual scene of tumult and violence'; and in confirmation of such an utterance the ecclesiastical historian, Eusebius, the trusted friend of the Emperor who convened the Council, expresses his conviction that 'an Evil Demon, who envied the peace and prosperity of the Church, set us at variance.'

Such words are indicative of but a poor response from the assembled Churchmen to the Emperor's prayer for charitableness towards one another.

It is with a sense of shame that we find them presenting to Constantine petitions in their own self-interest, or accusations against each other.

Before them all, the Emperor burns these unworthy indictments, which dishonoured those who brought them, and once more rebuking them for their self-seeking he commends their deliberations to the guidance of God's spirit.

The spirit of their debate may be easily divined. What consideration might Arius expect from men who were at discord among themselves? All the less, surely, from the anticipation that their quarrels with one another might be forgotten in their onslaught upon himself. And no issue save an unsatisfactory one could possibly attend the proceedings of a congress so unworthily begun. It is not too much to say that the Council to which Arius appealed showed itself generally hostile to him from the very first. His plea was met not only by angry words, but by fierce blows, for it is on record that in impatient anger at the forcible utterances of Arius, Nicholas, the Bishop of Myra, possibly unable to answer Arius in argument, struck him on the face.

And further, during the session of the Council, and before its decision was issued, a term fortuitously found, was adopted, and deliberately inserted in the doctrinal statement promulgated by the Council, because the majority were assured that the Arian party would never accept such an expression as correctly setting forth the relationship of Christ to God.

Christ was declared to be '*of the substance* of

the Father.' That was the doctrinal statement so ably and so persistently defended by Athanasius, a Deacon in the same Alexandrian Church in which Arius was a Presbyter. For the hour, as we know, the triumph of Athanasius was complete, but the saddest memory of the Council of Nicæa remains to be recorded. It was not only that Arius and those who held his views were adjudged to be heretical. Their opponents were perfectly justified in saying so, if they believed it; but a terrible precedent was established.

It will be remembered that the Emperor desired one definite form of faith and worship throughout all his vast dominions. In pursuance of that desire Constantine resorted to the infliction of civil punishment for heretical opinions. The secular power of the state was invoked against all who differed from the faith published at Nicæa, which 'established respecting the two first persons of the Trinity, the Doctrine which the Church still professes in the Nicene Creed.' And the same authority[1] reminds us that in a formal Edict addressed to the Bishops and to the people, 'Constantine consigned the books of Arius to the flames, nearly in the following terms—"If any man be found to have concealed a copy of those Books, and not to have instantly produced it, and thrown it into the fire, he shall be put to death. The moment he is convicted of

[1] Waddington: 'History of the Church,' p. 93.

this, he shall be subjected to capital punishment." ' Such a sentence, however, recorded by Socrates the historian, did not long stand. Soon we find Constantine himself veering round to the opinions of the man he was thus oppressing, and driving Athanasius into that banishment whence Arius was recalled. The time came when the Arians, in their turn, dealt out to their opponents, without compunction, the persecution from which they had themselves suffered; but in justice to Athanasius it must be recorded that no trials or sufferings availed to shake him from his constancy and consistency.

But when the Council closed, what recollections could its members carry away with them? What signified the 'sound and fury' inseparable from their remembrance of the scene? As the Christian chronicler has said, 'it was like a battle fought in the dark, for neither party seemed at all to understand on what ground they vilified each other.'

In the beginning of the controversy Constantine had asked both parties whether they did not agree upon essentials? And when Athanasius so boldly defended the doctrine that Christ was 'of one substance with the Father,' we know from his own words that he really meant that Christ was 'the true offspring of the substance of the Father,' while he goes so far as to declare that 'the substance of the Father was the beginning, the root,

the fountain, of the Son.' It cannot therefore be said that such a conception of the nature of Christ is identical with the statements in the Creed commonly yet erroneously associated with Athanasius's name. It may perhaps be permissible to say that Athanasius, consciously or unconsciously, was in reality contending for the Greek conception of the Deity, which was that of the immanence of God in human nature; while the estimate of God formed by Arius was that of God transcending all nature, and whose ineffable substance no created being could share, an estimate founded upon the venerable Hebrew idea of God, as supreme, apart from, and above all.

If there be any truth in such a thought, there is yet a living interest in those deep questionings concerning the Divine nature, which will surely exercise the human mind as long as man can think at all. It was vainly thought that all such questions were finally and exhaustively laid to rest, when the Council of Nicæa declared Jesus Christ to be 'of the substance of the Father, God of God, and Light of Light, very God of very God'; and when that decree was supported by pains and penalties for all who rejected it. Such a doctrine, promulgated some three centuries after the death of Jesus, was set forth in terms that would have sounded strangely indeed in the ears of the first disciples. It would surely

appeal vainly to their faithful successors, who treasured their beloved Master's emphatic reassertion of the old truth that 'the Lord our God is one Lord'; and who shared the faith that cheered the heart of Paul, who bowed his knee unto the God and Father of Jesus Christ, in abiding reliance upon 'one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all, and in us all.'

III

THE COUNCIL OF CONSTANTINOPLE
A.D. 381

WIDESPREAD theological speculation speedily followed the action of the Council of Nicæa, the purpose of which was the establishment of finality of doctrine. Little else, indeed, could have been expected from such an attempt to express in finite terms the attributes and the essence of Deity; for in men's efforts to define the undefinable their intellect and faith were taxed in vain.

In the half-century following the promulgation of the Nicene confession of faith, one theological theory was swiftly succeeded by another, and as each such appeared it was promptly declared to be heretical by those who differed from it.

Instead of banishing uncertainty from man's conceptions of the Deity, 'the commotions,' says the historian Mosheim,[1] 'excited by this controversy remained yet in the minds of many, and the spirit of discussion and controversy triumphed

[1] Ecc. Hist., Vol. i. p. 416.

both over the decrees of the council and the authority of the emperor.'

A brief glance at the differing theories which found adherents will reveal the perplexity under which the Christian world was labouring.

In the first place, there was the conception of the genuine Arians, that the Son was not begotten of the Father, that is, was not 'consubstantial' with him, but was created out of nothing. That theory was unacceptable to a party known as the Semi-Arians, who held that the Son was similar to the Father in his essence, only by a peculiar privilege, and not by nature; while yet another section of the Arians accepted the view of Eunomius, who boldly taught that the Son was unlike the Father both in his essence and in all other respects.

Such views were of course branded as heretical by the followers of Athanasius; but the very vehemence of their onslaughts upon the position of the Arians resulted in charges of heresy against theologians ranking as Orthodox.

No man more earnestly defended the doctrine of Christ's Deity against Arius than did Apollinaris, the Bishop of Laodicea; but his warm partisanship hurried him into extremes. His theory was that the body, which Christ assumed, was not endowed with a rational soul, for the Divine Nature supplied, in Christ, the place of the mind, the spiritual, the intellectual principle in man.

And so this defender of Orthodox Christianity was judged to be heretical, inasmuch as such a conception resulted in the blending of the Divine Nature with the human, which induced the idea that Christ's Divine Nature, with his human nature, actually suffered crucifixion and death.

The charge of heresy was very reasonably advanced against the views attributed to Marcellus of Ancyra, who went so far as to say that the Son and the Holy Ghost were to be regarded as emanations from the Divine Nature, which would subsequently and finally return again into the substance of the Father. Such a theory was at once seen to be incompatible with the belief of three distinct persons in the Godhead.

One teacher there was, Photinus, the Bishop of Sirmium, whose views were condemned alike by the Athanasian party, and by their opponents. He frankly acknowledged Christ as having been born of the Holy Ghost and the Virgin Mary, but held that a certain divine emanation, which he termed 'the word,' descended on Jesus, and it was on account of the union of the divine word with his human nature that Jesus was called the Son of God, and even God himself. The Holy Ghost, too, was declared by Photinus to be not a distinct person, but a celestial virtue proceeding from the Deity.

To the party of Athanasius such teaching was intolerable heresy; but it found acceptance with

many, prominent amongst whom was Macedonius, Bishop of Constantinople, who boldly declared the Holy Ghost to be no more than a divine energy diffused throughout the universe, and in no sense a person distinct from the Father and the Son.

Notwithstanding the declarations of the Nicene Council, the generation following it became the prey of uncertainty and speculation. The doctrine of the Logos—'the Word'—was almost entirely the creation of philosophical heathenism, and formed the contribution of Greek thought to Christianity as authoritatively set forth in the Nicene Creed.

'We may say with truth,' says Dr. Burton,[1] 'that between the general followers of Plato, and the corrupters of his doctrine, the whole learned world from Athens to Alexandria, and from Rome to Asia Minor, was beset with philosophical systems, in every one of which the term "Logos"—"Word"—held a conspicuous place.' With equal reason, too, Lord Macaulay has declared that 'Christianity conquered Paganism, but Paganism infected Christianity. The rites of the Pantheon were introduced into her institutions, and the subtleties of the Academy into her creed.'[2]

These troubles were reflected in the decisions of many Councils, of greater or of lesser influ-

[1] 'Bampton Lectures' for 1829, p. 215.
[2] Essay on 'Lord Bacon.'

ence, some forty-five such assemblies meeting during the fourth century. Of these no less than thirty were held to be unsatisfactory to the adherents of the Athanasian theology. Notably was this the case in regard to the Council of Rimini that declared for Arianism, A.D. 360, when, to quote the well-known words of Jerome, 'the whole world groaned and wondered to find itself Arian.'

To the impartial student of religious history, having due regard to the conditions of the time, these words will signify no more than the restlessness of the human mind beneath the exciting claims of antagonistic theories.

But there is another factor in the determination of the precise form of Christian doctrine, of which due account must be taken. The most striking fact in the history of Church life and doctrine in the fourth century is this—that the Churchman and the Statesman then began their partnership in influencing and enforcing the form and character of religious belief. That was the grave precedent set by the attitude of Constantine at the Council of Nicæa; and from that day, on to the assembly of the Council of Constantinople, and through many a subsequent century, the fortunes of ecclesiasticism are seen to be inseparably linked with the feelings of the temporal ruler, or with the schemes of the politician.

At the time of Constantine the civil power was successfully invoked by the Athanasians for the silencing of their opponents. The will of the monarch became the arbiter of the Church's faith ; the Church had indeed appealed unto Cæsar, and by that fact she made him her over-lord. People were soon to learn how much depended on the feelings, and even on the caprice, of the ruling sovereign.

For the claims of truth such influences involved disaster. Stained with the murders of his brilliant son, Crispus, and of his wife, Fausta, and deferring the remission of his sins by baptism till the rite was administered to him by an Arian bishop, as he lay upon his death-bed, little account could be taken either by Arian or Athanasian of the reality of such an emperor's faith. When Constantine had passed away, his son Constantius dealt out with an unsparing hand the sorrows of persecution against the followers of Athanasius. Both parties, let it be frankly admitted, dishonoured the cause they respectively sought to serve, by the remorseless persecution of one another ; but although, at the alternate bidding of Athanasian and of Arian, the streets of Alexandria, and of other cities also, became scenes of riot and of bloodshed, such exchanges from the rôle of the persecutor to that of the persecuted were barren of proof as to the truth or error of the opinions of these impassioned disputants.

It would be unjust to forget the inflexible and fearless consistency which marked the character and attitude of Athanasius ; but Christian history testifies to the fact that the Arians generally were certainly more inclined to toleration than were their Athanasian opponents. Their antagonism was more especially directed upon the anathemas pronounced against Arius, and those who believed as he did. Obstinate they might have been, and doubtless were, but in the words of an old writer, 'their obstinacy arose, not from want of faith, but from excess of charity.' They would be spiritually represented to-day by that increasing number of believers who revolt against being compelled to read the damnatory clauses of what is commonly called 'the Creed of Athanasius.' In this respect there is clearly discernible a contrast in the spirit animating these opposing schools of thought. The Arians, like their adversaries, had no scruples as to taking the sword and fighting for their creed, and persecuting their opponents ; but they saw a virtue in tolerance which Athanasius and his followers conscientiously held to be virtue misplaced. Like these latter, the Arians coveted the place of power ; and gaining that power, they would be tolerant to brethren of other views within the Christian fold, and even to the representatives of the old Pagan religion, which still survived in strength sufficient to attract attention, if not to compel respect. 'Let

all,' says the Arian Bishop Eusebius, 'enjoy the same spirit, let no one disturb another in his religious worship, let each act as he thinks fit. Let those, who withhold their obedience from thee, have their temples of falsehood, if they think fit.'

That such counsel reflected the bearing of Christian to Christian, in the age under consideration, it is impossible to believe. Such kindly thoughts may be characterized only as 'appearing ere the times were ripe'; especially when we remember how a pagan writer, Marcellinus, looking on at the fierce controversy, is found to say that 'No wild beast was so cruel an enemy to man, as most of the Christians were to each other.'

In a word, then, the faith of the Arian was distinctly associated with what in the present day would be termed a spirit of liberality, and that establishes a far higher claim to our respectful regard than any assertion of theological dogmas, however correct we may hold such to be. It is here that we touch the nobler side of Arianism, and if this be at all a just estimate of the spirit of its worthiest confessors, it should not surprise us to read that 'there can be no doubt that the profession of Arianism was common and even general throughout the East, towards the end of the fourth century, and that in some of the Asiatic provinces, especially Syria, such may have been the real belief of the majority.'

But as one Emperor succeeds another his own peculiar opinion is found to influence the opinion of his subjects, for in those rude times the favour of the ruler was a matter of gravest import. Accordingly the Church at one time seems to be Arian, and at another time Athanasian; for in the line of Emperors from Constantine to Theodosius, two only, Valentinian the Christian, and Julian the Pagan, can be said to have kept themselves free from prejudice in favour of one side or the other.

Again and again the flames of controversy were rekindled, and its course was marked by varying fortune, down to the time when the strong personality of the Emperor Theodosius made itself felt not only in the State but in the Church also. In a fashion, paralleled by our own King Henry VIII, he made it plain to all concerned that he intended to be master in his own house, even to the ruling of its faith and doctrine.

Theodosius was a staunch and an uncompromising supporter of Athanasian theology. Not unnaturally the aim of this masterful ruler of the Roman world was unity—not only political but religious also. He must be credited, too, with a very keen sense of the damage which these fierce theological controversies might involve to the State; and so strong was the spirit of controversy, not only with regard to the nature and attributes of Christ, but concerning those also of the Holy

Spirit, that a General Council of the Church was deemed essential. To reaffirm the doctrines published at Nicæa, and to set forth orthodox Christian belief touching the Holy Spirit, to banish uncertainty, and to unify Christian doctrine the Emperor Theodosius took it upon himself to convoke a Council at Constantinople, A.D. 381.

Of the purpose of that assembly we are left in no doubt, for in the year which preceded its deliberations, we find a decree issued in the name of Theodosius, and his two colleagues in the Empire, to the following effect—'We, the three Emperors, will that all our subjects follow the religion taught by St. Peter to the Romans . . . that they believe the one divinity of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, of majesty co-equal in the Holy Trinity. We will that those who embrace this creed be called Catholic Christians. We brand all the senseless followers of other religions by the infamous name of heretics, and forbid their conventicles to assume the name of churches. We reserve their punishment to the vengeance of heaven, and to such measures as divine inspiration shall dictate to us.'

Now it is to be noted that in these words we have a definite, an official declaration of Trinitarian doctrine not from the lips of a Father in the Church but from a secular ruler, and the vast increase in the influence of the State over the Church may be fairly inferred from the fact that

the summons to the Council was issued not by a Patriarch, or by a representative body of ecclesiastics, but by the Emperor himself.

That summons was obeyed by some hundred and fifty Bishops, and the spirit of their deliberations, and the character of their conclusions, may be gleaned from Dr. Jortin's scathing allusion to the Council in his 'Notes on Ecclesiastical History,' where he gives it as his opinion that 'a Council of gladiators held in an amphitheatre would be as venerable as that of the Constantinopolitan Fathers'; while he scruples not to add that, 'if such Councils made righteous decrees it must have been by strange good luck.'

From such a Council it was that there issued a decree authoritatively establishing as a vital point in Christian theology, the doctrine of the Godhead of the Holy Ghost. 'We believe,' so ran the declaration, 'in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of Life, who proceedeth from the Father, and who ought to be adored and glorified with the Father and the Son.'

That doctrine was not only promulgated, it was enforced, even as Theodosius told the Arians it would be, uncompromisingly and pitilessly; for, said he to the Arian Bishops some two years after the decree, 'I will not permit throughout my dominions any other religion than that which obliges us to worship the Son of God, in unity of essence with the Father and Holy Ghost in the

adorable Trinity. As I hold the empire from Him, and the power I have to command you, He likewise will give me strength, as He hath given me the will, to make myself obeyed in a point so absolutely necessary to your salvation and to the peace of my subjects.'

We read in Waddington's 'History of the Church,'[1] that 'the severities' of Theodosius 'were attended by general and lasting success, and the doctrine of Arius, if not perfectly extirpated, withered from that moment rapidly and irrecoverably throughout the Provinces of the East.'

In a statement that cannot be gainsaid, Theodosius is revealed as a prince among persecutors, by Gibbon,[2] who tells us that 'in the space of fifteen years Theodosius issued no less than fifteen severe edicts, more especially against those who rejected the doctrine of the Trinity; and, to deprive them of every hope of escape, he sternly enacted that if any laws or rescripts should be alleged in their favour the judges should consider them as the illegal productions of either fraud or forgery.'

In such fashion, and by such means, the decree of the Council of Constantinople was firmly established. Thenceforth, and by vast bodies of Christians still, the doctrine of the Godhead of the Third Person in the Holy Trinity is to be held as essential to everlasting salvation.

[1] p. 99. [2] Vol. III, xxvii.

For a while Arianism found acceptance among the Goths. There is much in Dean Milman's saying that those Teutons were 'unable to comprehend the fine and subtle distinctions of the Trinitarian faith,' while he pays no mean tribute to the spirit of the Arians when he declares that the Arian Goths 'were singularly tolerant of the orthodox tenets, and of the Catholic clergy.'[1]

[1] 'History of Christianity.' Vol. iii. p. 58, note.

IV

THE COUNCIL OF CHALCEDON, A.D. 451

A JUST estimate of the work and of the results of the early Church Councils necessitates our consideration of the circumstances and the strong feelings of the disputants who sought the decision of such assemblies.

The retrospect is a sad one, and is acknowledged to be such by heretic and orthodox alike.

The story of those times is one of passionate discussion, of confused thought, of relentless persecution, of strife, and even of bloodshed. From the shame of these things there was not a single one of the parties in these controversies that could free itself; whilst above it all, and perhaps the very cause of it, brooded the dark spirit of superstition.

In fact, the truer our appreciation of the times, and of the men who lived in them, the greater is our astonishment, and our regret also, at finding these men, of mental equipment so inadequate, with hearts so manifestly swayed by passion,

ambition, and motives which historians have condemned as unworthy of their calling, held up as guides and arbiters in matters of faith. They are inadequate teachers and exemplars for wise and worthy men in every branch of the Christian Church to-day, who are far more capable of instructing us concerning the things that be of God, and of commending to us by their own conduct and conversation the excellence of the Christian life.

Notwithstanding, then, the decisions of the two great Councils of the fourth century at Nicæa and at Constantinople, the spirit of controversy was not exorcised from the Church. If heresy and orthodoxy had fought out their differences on one field, other causes of debate remained, and, owing to the spirit of the age, were perhaps not unwillingly embraced.

'If,' says one old English divine,[1] 'we reflect seriously on these furious contentions, we shall see that the Christians of those times had a much stronger desire to dispute and quarrel than to discover truth.'

It may be urged, of course, that one Council had settled the controversy as to the Godhead of Christ, and another had decreed the coequal Godhead of the Third Person in the Trinity. But what, it may be asked, was really settled in those times of political strife and of theological restless-

[1] Jortin iv. p. 282.

ness ? Little, after all, surely ; and when spurious miracles were invoked in confirmation of declared faith, even an apologist of them is driven to say that these miracles were not necessary to convince men of the truth, or to confirm their faith, because the Christian religion was already satisfactorily established and confirmed by imperial laws. And yet, for all the external authority which men imagined they had secured for their faith, we know that 'Christianity was now embarrassed with intricate disputes, rash decisions, new ceremonies, and awkward practices much more adapted to destroy than to augment true piety.'

And, indeed, another question so intricate as to defy solution at the hands of such ill-qualified disputants as that age furnished was destined, not unnaturally, to follow upon the dogmatic pronouncements of the last two great Councils.

The fierce discussion, productive of so much evil to the Church, turned upon the question concerning the rightful title to be given to the Virgin Mary. Was it right to call her 'the Mother of God' ? In the contradictory answers given to that question are to be found the seeds of future altercation, of anathematisms, and finally of sanguinary conflicts. The contention, be it remembered, was not one between heretic and orthodox ; it was waged, and most fiercely too, between men who were alike zealous for what may be termed generally the orthodox faith.

Nestorius, Bishop of Constantinople in the year 428, took up the defence of his friend the Presbyter Anastasius, who averred that it was wrong to call the Virgin Mary 'the Mother of God,' for she could only be entitled 'the Mother of Christ.' For his defence of such a statement Nestorius was vehemently assailed by Cyril, the Bishop of Alexandria. But the contest between these two prelates 'proceeded,' as the historian Mosheim has declared,[1] 'rather from corrupt motives of jealousy and ambition, than from a sincere and disinterested zeal for truth, and was the source of evils and calamities without number.'

It is a sorry spectacle presented by the antagonism of these two accredited pillars of the faith. Twelve anathemas were uttered by the party of Cyril against Nestorius, and with a view of appeasing their mutual violence, the Emperor Theodosius II was moved to summon a General Council. Ephesus was the meeting-place, and thither these disputants repaired to consider and to define the twofold nature of Christ, because the title to be given to the Virgin Mary clearly depended on what was held to be the orthodox estimate of the nature of Christ.

'No Council,' it has been said, 'had hitherto decreed anything concerning the manner and effect of this union of the two natures' in Christ. On this great question Cyril found himself opposed

[1] Ecc. Hist., Vol. ii. p. 68.

not only to Nestorius but also to John, the Bishop of Antioch, who was supported by the Syrian prelates, with whom by slow stages he journeyed to Ephesus. Well has it been declared by the historian Mosheim that this Council at Ephesus was 'full of low artifice, contrary to all rules of justice, and even destitute of common decency.'

Eager for himself, Cyril seizes the president's seat, thus becoming as it were judge as well as pleader in his own court. He refuses to wait the arrival of John of Antioch, the friend of his opponent, Nestorius, who had refused to assent that God was born of Mary, and was condemned and anathematized without being permitted a word in his own defence. Tumults throughout the city followed hard upon the discussions within the Council, and that Council was dismissed after an obstinate dispute between the Alexandrian and the Syrian Bishops, who in their turn fiercely anathematised Cyril and his partisans. Sadly significant of the unworthy spirit of the members of that first Council at Ephesus were the final words which the Emperor addressed to them :— 'God is my witness that I am not the author of this confusion. His providence will discern and punish the guilty. Return to your provinces, and may your private virtues repair the mischief and scandal of your meeting.' Nestorius was then adjudged heretical. He was held to have denied Christ's divine nature, and sentence of banishment

was pronounced upon the aged prelate. Dragged hither and thither from one place of exile to another, he soon found in death that merciful rest which his adversaries had denied him in life. With the persecuted, the persecutor Cyril had passed too into the final peace; but the war of words and of opinions which they had waged was waked anew. A meet successor to the imperious and dogmatic Cyril was found in the truculent spirit of Dioscorus, the next Bishop of Alexandria. And then out of very aversion to the opinions of Nestorius, a new heresy was born; and that was associated with the name of Eutyches, Abbot of a convent in Constantinople. Eutyches declared without reserve 'that in Christ there was but *one* nature—that of the incarnate word.' In that declaration Dioscorus supported him; but the flames of controversy were kindled afresh, and loud was the contention that Eutyches was as heretical as Nestorius, in regard to the two natures in Christ, for Eutyches was denying Christ's human nature, even as belief in his divine nature had been imperilled by the teaching of Nestorius.

Again the Emperor Theodosius II is besought to convoke a Council of the Church, and in the year 449 there meets an assembly once more in the city of Ephesus, when, as it has been truly said, the tumults which had disgraced the Church at the previous Council in the year 431 were repeated,

with some additional brutalities, in the year 449. Nor is it a matter for surprise to find that this meeting has never been reckoned among the General Councils of the Church, since the recollection of the shameless passion and outrage that characterized its procedure does dishonour to our common Christianity. It has ever since been remembered in Church history as 'The Robber Council,' for the simple reason that 'everything,' as Mosheim says,[1] 'was carried in it by fraud or violence,' whilst, to our regret, we find the same writer recording his conviction that 'many Councils, indeed, both in this and the following ages, are equally entitled to the same dishonourable appellation.'

From the very composition of this Council neither justice nor wisdom could be expected. From partiality, or else from weakness, the Emperor selected the intolerant and passionate Dioscorus, the head of the Egyptian Church, to be the President; and never did a Christian Bishop draw after him a stranger, a fiercer, or a more ignorant following. The historian, Gibbon, reminds us of 'the swarms of monks who arose from the Nile, overspread and darkened the face of the Christian world.' These were such as had stained the streets of Alexandria with blood, and who were chargeable with the murder of Hypatia! Under their truculent leader, the Abbot Barsumas,

[1] Vol. ii. p. 77.

they lent support to their Bishop, whose word was strengthened also 'by a troop of brawny hospital waiters and soldiers who were admitted into the assembly,' as Neander tells us,[1] 'for the purpose of intimidating refractory members.' And as if to leave no doubt of his partiality, the Emperor himself 'appointed two civil officers—men of approved orthodoxy—to attend the proceedings as his plenipotentiaries,' who were 'authorized to remove every man who was bold enough to express freely his own convictions in opposition' to the party of the Bishop of Alexandria.

The whole narrative is disheartening to the last degree. Sore were the wounds inflicted upon the religion of Christ, 'through the cowardice or entire want of character shown by so many of the bishops, to whom,' as Neander frankly declares, 'the truth was not the highest of all interests.' And one thing more remains to be said touching the composition of this same Council; for, in the words of Dr. Jortin, 'some of these Fathers could not write their own name, and in the Council they were obliged to employ others to do it for them.'[2]

In brief, it was a furious monkish rabble, and a company of incompetent and terror-stricken ecclesiastics, swayed by a passionate president and a prejudiced emperor, that set themselves to consider so difficult a question as that of the nature of Christ.

[1] Vol. iv. p. 213. [2] Vol. iv. p. 276.

From such men as the gentle Theodoret, and Flavian, the Patriarch of Constantinople, 'the words of truth and soberness' were indeed heard; but imagination fails to realize the impatient ferocity with which they were assailed, or the unthinking passion with which every declaration of the fierce Dioscorus was acclaimed as nothing less than 'the voice of the Holy Spirit'! Angry cries greeted any man who in that wild assembly pleaded for the doctrine of two natures in Christ! 'Divide asunder the man himself who speaks of two natures!' 'Let him be burnt alive!' 'As he has cut asunder Christ, so let him be cut asunder!' And so, not unnaturally, this passion-tossed crowd came from words to blows. A maddened onslaught was made on Flavian of Constantinople; and Barsumas, the leader of those rough Egyptian monks, was he who actually assisted Dioscorus and his guards in fatally scourging Flavian, at this terrible assembly of maddened, ignorant, and bloodthirsty partisans. Little is it to be wondered at that the orthodox bishops sought to shun the fury that was rampant. They hid behind pillars, they crept for shelter into friendly corners, they drew themselves beneath the benches to escape the blows of the monks and of the soldiery, in what, with terrible irony, the historian calls 'that pious assembly'!

As dogs may worry sheep and drive them to the fold, so were those timid Churchmen driven

before the violence of their opponents. Unarmed, and stupefied by fear, they were 'hurried along against their will,' and repeated by rote 'whatever was prescribed to them.' More still remains to be told. By actual force they were constrained to subscribe to the decisions of the Council. They were kept in durance for a whole day in the church. They were threatened and browbeaten by the monkish throng, backed by the rough soldiery, and, in conclusion, '*blank* papers were laid before them for their signature, which could afterwards be filled up with whatever the predominant party chose. These were the men, who, by such consideration of the subject of debate, recorded their decision upon a point of theology demanding the most careful and calm discussion. And that decision was, that Eutyches was right, and that 'there was in Christ but one nature, and that was the incarnate word.'

None but the Egyptian zealots could rest satisfied with the decision of 'The Robber Council,' and those whose position had been condemned thereby, made appeal to no Eastern prince or prelate. But the fact of lasting import to the Christian world is that appeal was made for the good offices of Leo, the Bishop of Rome, who was entreated to move the Emperor to summon another General Church Council, to repair the evil declared to be wrought at 'The Robber Council.'

'The Roman pontiff,' says Mosheim, 'was the ordinary refuge of the oppressed and conquered party in this century.' Before the death of Theodosius, Leo had urged the need of a General Council, to which suggestion no heed was paid, but on the accession of Marcian a favourable answer was given to Leo's renewed appeal. The Roman Bishop set forth the perplexed condition of the Church as demanding the summoning of a Council composed out of the Church Universal. Consent was given, and Nicæa was originally selected as the place of meeting. It became only too apparent that the tactics of the fanatics who had shouted for Dioscorus, and cruelly scourged Flavian, would be repeated, and therefore the emperor, whose presence at the Council was declared by the Roman pontiff to be essential, transferred it to Chalcedon, and so brought it under the restraining influence of the government.

There the Council met in the year 451; and thence went forth the decree which was to be accepted as orthodox in regard to the doctrine of the two natures in Christ.

If we inquire as to the spirit in which the Fathers of the Church, Egyptian, Eastern, and Roman, came together on that occasion, it would be found to present a marked correspondence with the altered tone and feeling of the Imperial Court.

During the first proceedings of the Council, the greater part of the prelates, who had previously

sided with the Egyptian party, betook themselves to the company of the Eastern Bishops, and these sat under the presidency of the delegates from the Roman Church. With good reason, further strife was deprecated. 'We have all sinned,' 'We all ask forgiveness!' were the cries raised in response to the proposition for deposing all who had associated themselves with the outrages of that wild assembly at Ephesus two years before.

The angry cries were unheard, the wild fury had spent itself, men cared not to remember these things. But the marked feature of this Council of Chalcedon was the triumph in which it resulted for the prestige and for the doctrine of Leo and the Roman Church. The opinions of the pontiff had been fully stated in an epistle to the unhappy Flavian, lingering to his death from the terrible scourge of his enemies at Ephesus. That very letter was accepted as an authoritative declaration of orthodox Christian doctrine. Prepared by a committee of eighteen prelates, the point of doctrine set forth by Leo of Rome was accepted with enthusiasm, and with eager voices the assembled ecclesiastics were heard to cry, 'We all have the same faith with Leo!' And that article of faith promulgated at Chalcedon was this, 'That in Christ two distinct natures were united in one person, and *that* without any change, mixture, or confusion.'

Such was the development of theological belief associated with the Council of Chalcedon. The comparatively brief and quiet procedure of that Council is, as we have seen, overshadowed by the excited controversies, the relentless enmities, and the blind passion which marked the Churches for half a century previously ; but if we can realize the character of the disputants, and the methods they did not hesitate to pursue in what they believed to be the service of God, the result should be a more just estimate of their efforts, in rougher times and with less developed powers, to solve those deep questions, which even yet await an adequate answer from the most highly trained intellects and the most disciplined spirits in the Church of Christ.

V

THE SECOND LATERAN COUNCIL, A.D. 1139

When we read of Councils assembling in the Church of St. John the Lateran, at Rome, and find Roman Catholics declaring that these Councils are to be regarded as 'Œcumenical,' we begin to realize the growth of Rome's power and authority in the Christian world.

For the student of religious history the story of that growth can never lose its enthralling interest. And curiously parallel with the record of Rome's advance to universal empire over the Western world is that of her progress to the seat of authority in matters pertaining to religion.

Her national life arose from small beginnings; so too did her spiritual influence.

In the early days of Christianity—notably in the days when Arianism seemed likely to be the predominant faith of the Christian Church—Rome stands in the light of a resort and refuge for the oppressed Athanasians, who groaned under such fierce persecution as they had themselves taught the Arians to practise.

And further, when an ambitious Bishop of Constantinople laid claim, in the sixth century, to predominance over all Christendom, it is interesting indeed to learn how that claim was met and disputed by the then Bishop of Rome, Gregory the Great, who stood in defence of all the bishoprics in Europe, as well as his own, and protested against such arrogance in these words: 'This I declare with confidence, that whoso designates himself Universal Priest, or, in the pride of his heart, consents to be so named, he is the forerunner of Antichrist.'

But time and circumstances wrought a tremendous change in the attitude and pretensions of the triumphant Church of Rome. And if we would learn what caused her advancement in prestige, and constituted her the arbiter of the religious world, the reasons can soon be stated.

In the first place, Rome, relying upon the traditionary association of the Apostle Peter with her early history as a centre of Christianity, never forgot, or allowed others to do so, that she was the only Apostolic Church in Western Christendom. As Gieseler reminds us, the Roman bishops 'strenuously opposed the opinion that they and the other patriarchs owed their prominence to the importance of the cities in which they resided.' Constantinople might boast itself as the seat of imperial power, and Alexandria might pride itself as a centre of learning. Rome took higher ground.

She claimed an Apostolic sanction for her faith and discipline, and that claim surely came to be allowed. For example, at a Council held at Sardica, in the middle of the fourth century, a decree was made by which all condemned bishops were allowed to appeal to the Bishop of Rome.

Then, again, the genius of the Eastern branch of the Church was essentially different from that of the Western.

The Eastern Churches were stirred with keen excitement on speculative questions, which had but little interest for their Western fellow-Christians. Rome was often found standing aloof. Her adherents were united in support of their bishops, they were strong in orthodox conviction. And in all these controversies Rome gave her judgment, at the critical time, and the scale was turned in her favour.

This was the case in regard to the Council of Nicæa, when the Arians were defeated; while at the Council of Constantinople, 'it was plain enough,' says Gieseler,[1] 'that the great question of the day had been decided by the firmness and stability of the Western Church. . . . From this time forth, there was no controversy in the East in which each party did not seek to win the Bishop of Rome, and through him the Western Church, to its cause. . . . At the Councils his legates were always treated with the greatest deference,

[1] Vol. i. p. 259.

and at the Council of Chalcedon they, for the first time, presided.'

That was a proud day for the Church of Rome; for although that Council did decree 'the same rights to the Bishop of Constantinople in the Eastern Church, which the Bishop of Rome enjoyed in the Western,' Leo of Rome protested, and the Bishop of Constantinople was compelled by the Emperor Marcian 'to write to Leo in a submissive strain.'

This was the prelate known in history as Leo the Great. He excelled all his predecessors in the way of developing the power of the Bishops of Rome. Moreover, from the reigning Emperor of the West, Valentinian III, A.D. 445, he obtained a decree, 'by which the Roman Bishop was made the head of the whole Western Church.'[1]

The spiritual jurisdiction of Rome was extended throughout the distant province of Illyria, which drew away from the Bishop of Constantinople. In Gaul, too, a disputed claim to a Bishopric was referred to the decision of Rome, and naturally led to the extension of its influence in that province also.

Another circumstance must be noted as favouring the development of the power of the Church of Rome. It was not all the Emperors of the West who resided, as well as ruled, in Rome. We read of the transference of the seat of power,

[1] Gieseler, Vol. i. p. 269.

in one instance to the city of Milan, and in another to Ravenna. But the Bishop was constant in his residence, and in rough times of the dislocation of civil and imperial power the Church remained at once the symbol and the bond of disciplined life, and of lawful restraint. Having regard to this fact, it is not wonderful to find temporal power beginning to link itself with spiritual authority. To do the Church justice, it can be said that the obligations imposed by her purified, sustained, and saved society; her assemblies became veritable rallying points for the cause of law and order. The very facts of life around her contributed to her advancement, nor could it well have been otherwise. It is scarcely true that she always grasped at power, but she could not fail to use the opportunities made for her, if she would remain faithful to her trust. Insensibly then, but certainly and increasingly, the temporal and the spiritual influences of the Church of Rome became woven with one another.

It is only natural to find, therefore, that 'the Roman bishops . . . began to take a different view of their dignity as the successors of Peter'; '. . . they acknowledged that their peculiar privileges did not originally belong to them only as successors of Peter, but had been conferred upon them, in early times, . . . and that is a view fully developed by Leo the Great.'[1]

[1] Gieseler, Vol. i. p. 261.

It was not such a very great step from correcting a Bishop to rebuking an earthly King; and that is a thought which leads us to mark the advance from the spiritual pre-eminence claimed by Leo in the fifth century, to the temporal authority of the Church over all earthly rulers put forth in the eleventh century by one of the greatest of the Popes—namely, Gregory VII.

'Sprung from the lowest ranks of the people, the grim-hearted monk never for a moment was false to his order. He looked on lords and kings as tyrants and oppressors: he looked on bishops themselves as lording it over God's heritage,' and to hold both alike in check 'he dreamed of a Popedom, universal in its claims—an incarnation of the fiercest democracy. . . . He had the wrath of generations of serfdom rankling in his heart,' and had 'a satisfaction in bringing low the haughty looks of the proud.'[1] What he meditated he has himself told us, for in his published notes we read 'There is but one name in the world, and that is the Pope's. He only can use the ornaments of empire. All princes ought to kiss his feet. He alone can nominate and displace bishops, and assemble or dissolve Councils. Nobody can judge him. His mere election constitutes him a saint. He has never erred, and never shall err in time to come. He can depose Princes, and release subjects from their oaths of fidelity.'

[1] White: 'Eighteen Christian Centuries,' p. 238.

The attitude and the actions of this pontiff absolutely corresponded to these thoughts. To his credit, be it said, he laid a stern hand upon the abuses that brought reproach to the Church, and to the clergy. Earnestly he strove to banish the sin of simony, by which, advancement in the Church had become a mere matter of money.

But his spirit reached forward to a power over the Kings of the earth, nor was the occasion long wanting for its assertion. The rulers of the German Empire had always claimed and exercised the right to have a voice in the appointment of Bishops. That right was challenged by Gregory, who haughtily demanded the renouncement of that right by the Emperor Henry IV. When sorely pressed by his enemies Henry promised obedience, but denied it when he had triumphed over them.

In anger, the Pope pronounced the sentence of excommunication against Henry, who, tyrant as he was, found his own people deserting him, and was forced to yield. He crossed the Alps in the depth of winter, and humbly and as a penitent he sought the Pope, and presented himself before the castle of Canossa. Rome was indeed grasping temporal authority, and the well-known proverb of ' going to Canossa ' was a common way of expressing the fact. Truly the degradation was unheard of : the shame of it, and the good feeling outraged by it, raised troops of friends for the dis-

graced emperor, but though the Pope soon died in sorrow and in exile, when the fortune of war turned against him, the lofty claim of the Papacy once put forth, was never laid aside, and the right of investiture of Church dignitaries, previously exercised by the Emperor, was for ever after the unquestioned privilege of the Pope.

It is in the year 1123 that we come upon the evidence of jealousy between two orders of ecclesiastics—the monks and abbots on the one side, who were prohibited from the performance of public Masses, and other religious rites, which were entrusted wholly to the secular clergy—or in other words, the parochial priesthood. That was decreed by a Council held in Rome, and known in history as the First Lateran Council.

That name is associated not only with papal, but with pagan Rome, the Rome of the dark days of Nero's tyranny. In the city at that time was a splendid palace, the residence of a noble patrician family, known as the Laterani. Nero seized the building for his own purposes, and, until the days of Constantine the Great, it remained in possession of the Roman Emperors. But when Constantine embraced Christianity he gave the building to the Bishops of Rome as a dwelling-place, and there they resided until they took up their abode in the Vatican. The Basilica, then, became a Church, and has been known from that time as the Church of St. John the Lateran. In that build-

ing no less than eleven Councils have been held, known all of them as Lateran Councils, at the first of which the distinction was drawn between the two orders of clergy, which proved a source of envy and of suspicion between them. And here, surely, we touch the influence put forth by the Monk upon the life and thought of the whole of Western Christendom.

There are names in religious history which are but other words for controversy, strife, reformation, and tribulation, to the great Church of Rome. Abelard, the nature of whose philosophical attack upon the position of the Church is seen in his unflinching contention for the unquestioned supremacy of reason, was a monk. Arnold of Brescia, that fearless reformer 'appearing ere the times were ripe,' was also a monk. Savonarola, who sought so nobly to reform the great Church from within, was a monk. And what more can we say of the great and triumphant hero of the Reformation than that Martin Luther was 'the Monk that shook the world.' It was from this order that there came forth the opponents of the luxury, the worldliness, the self-indulgence of the bishops and the clergy. Knowledge was slowly but surely growing. Men like Abelard taught their fellows to think. It was to little purpose that prelates and priests declared that they did but hold this world's goods in trust for Christ. Men saw the effects of all this, and those

who sought to restore to the Church her simplicity of life, were not slow to point the clergy to the glaring contrast between precept and practice. What could there be in common between the monk, the devotee, pledged to the renunciation of this world's goods and privileges in the service of one who had not where to lay his head, and ecclesiastics surrounded with every luxury the world could give, while nobles and princes waited to hold their golden stirrups as they mounted their pampered steeds?

It was to be expected that protests sharp and strong would be uttered, and Arnold, the young Monk of Brescia, fresh from the teaching of Abelard, was the man who gave that protest a voice. He sought, in a word, to give practical application to the theories of his teacher, Abelard.

The luxury of the clergy was the point of his attack, and for his work he gathered up all the powers of thought and reason within his soul.

Terrible was the burden which the heroic Arnold took up, for, as the historian truly says, 'Reason awoke; composed itself again to despairing slumber on the lap of authority; awoke again: its slumbers became more disturbed, more irregular till the anodyne of awe had lost its power.'

A defender of the bishops, and of ecclesiastical practices as they were, spoke of Abelard as 'this huge Goliath with his armour-bearer Arnold of Brescia,' and looked upon them both as defying

the armies of the Lord to battle. The name of Arnold was the great storm-centre of the time, and a distinctly dangerous rebellion carrying with it not only men's indignant feeling, but their common sense as well, was about to try the Church as she had rarely been tried in all her previous history.

Arnold of Brescia saw and bewailed the evils which defiled the Church. When he began his work, which we can see now was hopeless from the first, in view of the spiritual and worldly forces arrayed against him, he was orthodox in faith, and good it is to rest assured from the testimony of his opponents themselves that he was a man of reproachless character, as well as of heroic temperament. He must have been a worthy forerunner of the great Savonarola. It has been said that in him the Monk and the Republican were blended together; 'Sharp as a sword, and soft as oil,' we are told, was his eloquence. 'Salvation,' he declared, so Milman affirms,[1] 'was impossible to a priest holding property, a bishop exercising temporal power, a monk retaining any possession whatever.'

He made his appeal, not to the authority of the Church, which he disregarded, but to the precepts of Christ himself.

Poverty, he declared, primitive and apostolic, should be the lot of all the clergy, without dis-

[1] 'Latin Christianity,' Vol. iv. p. 375.

tinction. All that the Churches and the Monasteries had become possessed of should be surrendered to the Sovereign; but that sovereign was no despotic ruler, it was a governing assembly of the whole people! And is not this but a vision and nothing more even to-day? How, therefore, can we wonder at finding the imperial and pontifical power allied against him, in the stern resolve to crush what both of them alike held to be their common foe?

Naturally, the voice of the Church was lifted up against Arnold. At that very time it happened that the Second Lateran Council was in session at Rome. It had met, at the summons of Innocent II, on 4 April, 1139, when no less than a thousand bishops, with a vast company of abbots and other ecclesiastics, were assembled. The debates of the Council, it is true, have not been preserved; but its decrees survive, and these, together with the utterances of the Pope, clearly show that the Council was convoked to strengthen the personal authority of the Pope, to tighten the reins of ecclesiastical discipline, and to safeguard the doctrine of the Church against heretical opinions, which were surely beginning to force themselves on the attention of her adherents. By the twenty-third canon of this Council it was decreed that 'We expel from the Church as heretics those who, under the semblance of religion, condemn the sacrament of the body and blood of Christ, the

baptism of children, the priesthood, and the holy rite of marriage.'

Before such an august assembly Arnold was arraigned. It is to be noted that he was condemned, not for heresy, but for schism, and his sentence was banishment, not death. After a while we find him at Zurich, where the memory of his teaching may well have appealed to one amongst the Reformers of Luther's time, Ulrich Zwingli, the most liberal, the most progressive, the most fearless of that great company. For years we lose sight of Arnold altogether, but suddenly he appears in Rome, the moving spirit of an attempt at a Republic, modelled, but vainly alas! upon that of ancient Rome. We read of civil strife and bloodshed, of Popes fighting for their sovereignty, and of one slain while leading his soldiery against the people. One pontiff there was, Celestine by name, stirred with love of liberty, and confidence in Arnold; but death was his early portion, and the fierce strife was waked anew.

Another Pope, Eugenius, lacked heart to enter into the conflict, and timidly quitted the city, while for a brief period Arnold was master of Rome, seeking to give effect to his reforms, until in the minds of a fickle populace he lost favour and support.

There were no pilgrimages to the shrines of the buried saints at Rome in those days. The prestige

of the city was lowered, and after the pattern of those who once shouted—'Great is Diana of the Ephesians!' the men, whom Arnold would have uplifted, turned from him, and rendered his second condemnation an easy task. But banishment was not security sufficient for Emperor and Pope. Through the practices of the Emperor Frederic, and to the satisfaction of the Pope, Hadrian IV, the only Englishman that ever became a Pope, Arnold was captured, and sent a prisoner to Rome. Remorseless, swift and secret was the cruel fate meted out to him. Speedily a day came, and lo! he was not: but how the fearless Monk of Brescia came to his end 'no man knoweth unto this day.' One thing is told us, which is a testimony to the influence of Arnold's spirit, and to the enthusiastic love that he so widely inspired—his body was burned, and his ashes cast into the Tiber, that not one single relic of the great reformer might be the subject of the multitude's hero-worship. It is the condemnation of Arnold that quickens our remembrance of the Second Lateran Council; for in opposing the efforts of Roman Bishops after temporal dominion the whole world over, as Dean Milman has well and truly said, 'it required a league between a powerful emperor and an able Pope to crush Arnold of Brescia. But in the ashes of Arnold of Brescia's funeral pile smouldered for centuries the fire which was at length to blaze out in irresistible violence.'

VI

THE FOURTH LATERAN COUNCIL, A.D. 1215

Of all the eleven Councils held at St. John the Lateran, the Fourth, which assembled there in the year 1215, is by far the most noteworthy.

Several causes conspired to render it so.

A glance at the political condition of Europe, at that time, would show us a picture of turbulent and unsettled national life, not only in Germany, and in France, but in Britain also. Contending despots and restless peoples, and even family quarrels within Kings' houses, were either the symptoms or the causes of a dislocation of this world's affairs, that presented a sorry contrast to the solidarity of the marvellous influence and power of the great hierarchy of Rome.

Its voice, once uplifted, suffered not itself to be gainsaid. The great Church pressed unwaveringly upon its progress ever to more assured authority in things temporal as well as spiritual; and as from time to time, some master-spirit like Leo the Great, or Gregory VII, or Innocent III,

directed the destinies of Rome, with all the driving power of a strong personality, we cease to wonder at the height of authority to which Rome won her way.

No marvel that she called her Councils together in a fashion truly imperial, and held them every one to be œcumenical, or in other words, representative of all Christendom.

Never, surely, was a more brilliant or illustrious gathering of the Chieftains of the Church than this Fourth Lateran Council. Seventy-seven Archbishops, four hundred and twelve Bishops, eight hundred Abbots and Priors, together with 'ambassadors from most of the Christian Courts,' not only, be it observed, from the West, but from the East also: such was the composition of the assembly convened by Pope Innocent III.

The matters to be debated, the doctrines to be promulgated, at the instance of Innocent himself, were of an importance befitting the influence and authority of the ecclesiastics summoned to discuss, and it may be truly said, to decree them, as being at once necessary and orthodox.

Papal authority was never greater or more far-reaching than during the period of some hundred-and-forty years that intervened between the accession of Gregory VII, in 1073, and the death of Innocent III, in the year 1216.

We have already observed the growth of the

temporal power under Gregory, from whom an Emperor begged his crown, standing for days in sackcloth at the Pope's castle gate. But what Gregory had begun to foster, Innocent developed, since the weakness of rulers, and the troubles of their subjects rendered it the easier for him to assert his constantly increasing claims.

A marked characteristic of the rule of this resolute Pope is found, as the historian[1] tells us, in the fact 'that the collective power of the episcopal order was not so great at that time,' as it had previously been. In two or three preceding centuries we find synods of bishops criticizing and influencing the conduct of temporal rulers. Those synods had ceased to be, but the authority they had once wielded, and then laid down, passed over, not to the monarchs, but to the Pope, and by the pontiff that tremendous power 'was exercised with . . . a unity of design, and a consistent perseverance, which could not possibly have directed a long series of local and dependent councils.' In brief, the sovereign power of the Pope increased in proportion as the authority of the Bishops grew weaker.

The Bishops in fact became the agents, the servants, of the supreme pontiff. Marked evidence of the increase of pontifical authority within the Church is presented to us when we find this same Pope, not content with exacting from the priest-

[1] Waddington, p. 347.

hood large occasional contributions, but imposing, and attempting to perpetuate, a regular tax on ecclesiastical property. He ceased from such a demand, we are told; but Innocent's position must have been strong indeed to have warranted him in entertaining the project at all.

But of the obedience from his Bishops, on which the Pope might rely, no stronger proof can be adduced than the employment for the purposes of the Church, of that tremendous instrument known as the Papal Interdict.

In speaking of it, of the terrors that accompanied it, and the sorrows which its promulgation entailed on innocent and guilty alike, let us have due regard to the temper of the times, and to the grave fact that persecution, by the infliction of civil punishments and disabilities for differences of religious belief was not peculiar to the Roman Catholic Church. Centuries after the time now before our consideration the Protestants of Reformation days conscientiously relegated to the correction of the Civil Magistrate, the men who differed from themselves: and strange it is to find amongst all the leaders of thought in the period of the Reformation only one, Faustus Socinus, who held the infliction of such penalties to be utterly wrong and unjustifiable.

We are looking upon the scenes of history, and we must leave the facts we find there to teach their own solemn and significant lessons.

Under the exercise of the power put forth in the more frequent and regularised promulgation of an Interdict, all administration of the Sacraments, the celebration of public worship, and the burial of the dead were sternly forbidden. In such an age as that of the twelfth century the issue of such an edict reduced individuals and whole States to the most abject submission. 'In the Middle Ages,' we are told,[1] 'it was the most terrible blow which could be inflicted on the people or the prince.'

So fearful was the resort to such a power held to be, that we find St. Augustine, at the end of the fifth century, disapproving of such a practice, as involving the indiscriminate punishment of the evil doers and of the guiltless alike. In the ninth century, in Western Christendom, we learn of the Bishop of Laon being censured by the Bishop of Rheims for resorting to such proceedings. But at last, in the eleventh century, the Interdict obtained recognition as a rightful and necessary means of discipline at the disposal of the Roman hierarchy. No Pope was more resolute in its employment than Innocent III. In France he made its terrors felt over the domestic disagreements of King Philip and his Queen, and the disobedience to papal authority of that wanton tyrant John brought down the selfsame sorrows upon our own land, when it trembled at the terrible Interdict, until

[1] Brand and Cox, Vol. ii. p. 231.

John repented, and in utter humiliation begged back his English crown from the Roman pontiff.

In ancient days there is to be found but one among the Kings of Europe who quailed not before the Interdict of the Pope, and that was William the Lion, of Scotland. The Archbishopric of St. Andrews was the matter of dispute, on which Pope Alexander III put forth this weapon of his power. The Scottish king stood resolute, Pope Alexander died, and his successor, Clement, recalled the excommunication. The last echo of this thunder died away in the early years of the last century, when the final exercise of this terrible power was the issue of an Interdict by Pius VII in 1809 against Napoleon Bonaparte; but we marvel not that the decree was inefficient, whilst the great soldier was left to fight his battles out, and die at last in exile on that lonely island amid the South Atlantic.

Innocent III was the Pope at whose behest the Fourth Lateran Council met, to purge the Church from newly wakening heresy, and to erect a standard of doctrine that should be lastingly accepted, and which, let us not forget, is accepted by multitudes, not only of uninstructed peasants, but of scholars and thinkers at the present day.

In that assembly no spirit of compromise was traceable. The great Church at the call of him who, to her, was the Vicegerent of Christ, was setting herself further to define her doctrine, and

to decree such religious observances as might allay all questioning doubt, and confirm her faithful ones.

One of the earliest decrees of this great Council, revealing its spirit and purpose in the clearest light, was a declaration that no earthly rulers were to tolerate the residence or even the presence of any heretics whatsoever in their dominions. Should any temporal ruler refuse either to persecute or to expel these objects of ecclesiastical suspicion, then that ruler should himself underlie the terrors of excommunication. Did even these fail to deter him from sheltering a heretic, then if he failed to make submission within a year, ' the Pope should pronounce his vassals absolved from their oath of fidelity, and expose his dominions to the conquest of the Catholics.'[1]

How far the spiritual empire of the pontiff transcended the temporal sway of the earthly ruler may be gathered from the fact ' that this decree, which placed secular authorities directly at the disposal of the spiritual . . . was enacted in the presence, and with the consent, of the ambassadors of several sovereigns.'

When such orders went forth, we wonder not at the renewed stringency of laws directed against the Jews. Not a single public appointment of trust was a Jew to be allowed to hold. He might not walk among his fellow-men, clad in Christian

[1] See Waddington, p. 349.

garb, whilst in Holy Week he was, on no excuse, to be permitted to appear in public at all.

Indicative of the unquestioned pre-eminence and influence of Pope Innocent are certain facts concerning this Council, of which due notice must be taken.

In the first place, no less than seventy Canons or decrees were dictated to the assembly by Innocent himself, and his declarations were accepted with the most unquestioning acquiescence. We hear nothing from any source of any discussions or frank expressions of individual opinion. When Gregory VII declared that the Pope always was and ever would be infallible, his words seem really an anticipation of the feeling of the members of this assembly. The Council met in November, 1215, and within a month from the beginning of its deliberations it had registered every one of Pope Innocent's decisions; it had discharged its office, and its members separated.

Amid the transactions of this Council there are two decrees, one concerning Church discipline, and the other concerning Church doctrine, which do, and surely ever will, possess a very deep and solemn interest for Christendom.

To this Fourth Lateran Council, then, the Church of Rome owes the establishment of the practice of Auricular Confession; and that was placed at the Pope's behest 'among the duties prescribed by the divine laws.' Such confession 'implied

not only a general acknowledgment but also a particular enumeration of the sins ' of such as sought comfort through their trusted confessor.

It is to be noted, too, that penitents were enjoined to make, at least once a year, a private confession of their sins to their own priest, and, at the same time, were prohibited from confessing to any other priest, without the special permission of their own.

It must be borne in mind that our part at present is simply that of observers of the facts of religious history. He who would lay bare those facts is not called upon to make history wait upon argument. Let it suffice to point to the Church's mandate for a practice fraught with the deepest feelings, and the most momentous issues.

Who can calculate the subtle, unseen, yet most certain power with which the faithful priests of the Church of Rome are thus invested ?

The knowledge which must by this penitential discipline pass into the priest's keeping, which provides for him, whether he will or no, an acquaintance with the very sanctities of home life, and which by the power of religion constitutes each individual Father Confessor the final arbiter of many and many a life, necessarily endues the priesthood of the Roman Catholic Church with an overwhelming responsibility. And all this is recognized, accepted, believed in, by good and saintly souls as near to God as any

of those who shrink from confession to any but the pitying Father above us! But that is the awful trust which the Roman Catholic Priest holds in his hand, and which was surely delivered to him by this Fourth Lateran Council some seven centuries ago.

At that Council it will be seen that Rome cast upon her children the obligation to complete spiritual obedience; and now it remains to call to mind the vast demand which she laid upon their faith.

For a lengthened period, so Mosheim thinks, before the age now under consideration, a certain amount or, as he holds, a large amount of 'liberty had been left to believers to interpret the doctrine of the presence of Christ in the Eucharist.' Berengar, of Tours, not long previous to the Council, had expressed his sense of the spiritual presence of the Body and Blood of Christ therein; but if any lingering doubt upon the matter remained, it was removed by the decree which, at the instance of the Pope, was issued by the Fourth Lateran Council.

Innocent wished to obviate the possibility of any heretical evasions. He knew the binding power of an apt word. That word employed by him—the word 'Transubstantiation'—has set forth from that day to our own the definitely expressed orthodox faith of every sincere Roman Catholic believer.

By the opponents of the Church of Rome it is, we know, maintained that the doctrine is not found in Scripture, or in the writings of the Fathers, or in the canons of the early Church. But the condemnation of other doctrines on the ground of their non-scriptural justification would as certainly give pain to a multitude of fellow-Christians, other than those who adhere to the Church of Rome. Of course, the idea of the Real Presence in the Sacrament found expression from individual thinkers long before the days of Pope Innocent; his part was that of consolidating the doctrine by the term. And, according to the doctrine he presented for the acceptance of the Council, 'the elements,' to quote Dean Milman,[1] 'ceased entirely to be what they still seemed to be to the outward senses. The substance of the bread and wine was actually annihilated. Nothing existed but the body and blood of the Redeemer—the body and blood of the Redeemer resuscitated in the flesh—yet to which belonged the ubiquity and the eternity of the divine nature.' To quote another authority,[2] 'the doctrine held by the Church of Rome' is 'that in the Eucharist the bread and wine are annihilated and replaced by the body and blood of Christ. In one of its liturgical offices' the Church of Rome says, 'This *is not bread*, but God and Man, my Saviour.' And this great change takes place upon the utterance of those solemn

[1] Vol. iii. p. 387. [2] Brand and Cox, Vol. iii. p. 837.

words, 'This is my body.' It is, astounding though the conception be, the daily miracle of that great Church, which lies within the power she claims to delegate to the humblest priest that ministers at her altar.

Lutheran and Anglican may dispute Rome's proud assertion of the spiritual inheritance entrusted to her sole keeping, but the logical alternative to her stupendous doctrine of the Real Presence in the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper is that presented by the simple-hearted and intrepid Swiss reformer, Ulrich Zwingli, who held that solemn service to be only an act of devout and of sacred remembrance.

It was by the uncompromising assertion of this great doctrine of Transubstantiation, as well as by the establishment of Auricular Confession, that the Fourth Lateran Council secured for itself so prominent a position in the history of Christianity.

VII

THE COUNCIL OF TOULOUSE, A.D. 1228

The decisions of the Fourth Lateran Council were emphasised by another Council convened after a brief interval by Pope Honorius III, which met in the city of Toulouse in the year 1228. The subject to which the ecclesiastics addressed themselves was essentially the same at both these assemblies. The need of protecting the faith of the Catholic world from the influences of opinions, which the Church held to be heretical, was felt to be an increasing one. The intensity of the struggle between Church authority and private judgment is to be measured by the growing severity of the conditions by which heresy everywhere began to find itself beset.

The story of that conflict is one which should be scanned with self-restraint, and told nowadays 'more in sorrow than in anger.'

To judge the men of those dark times by the standards of our present-day life would savour as much of injustice as of ignorance. Moreover,

when we deprecate, as it is our solemn duty ever to do, the employment of the civil power for the punishment and suppression of a man's religious opinions, our condemnation of such a practice should be at least impartial. If penance is to be done for this, it must be rendered not by the Roman Catholic alone; the Protestant must stand side by side with him, and take his honest share in the judgment that must be cast against them both.

We speak of the Middle Ages as the Dark Ages, and with good reason; for their record is that of undeveloped social life, and of most imperfect knowledge. It was an age of truths half-seen, and therefore terribly misunderstood; what wonder, then, that innocent blood was shed, and that undeserved tears fell so thickly? If the careful student learns any one fact above another from the history of those fierce times, it is that the Church after all did not comprise the worst of the world. Everywhere men held that their salvation depended upon the doctrines they believed; that was a conviction common to the Reformer and the Catholic; and their fury against their adversaries was only the logical expression of their intense and passionate devotion to that conviction.

Blindly but sincerely the persecutors everywhere seized on the Master's half-understood words—'What shall a man give in exchange for

his soul ? '—and armed with such a potent misconception, they proceeded without hesitation, every one of them, like Dominic in one church, or like Calvin in another, to fearful deeds wherein they were equally possessed with the thought that they did God service.

The Council of Toulouse is to be remembered in history from the fact that by it was effected the permanent establishment of the Inquisition in that city. The very name of that institution is fraught with sorrow for the whole world, but we are well reminded that ' its germs lie in the duty of searching out and correcting error entrusted to the deacons in the early churches.' Rome, it is true, developed the system, but she cannot be credited with the origination of it. That must be assigned to a far earlier date, for Constantine and his successors first had recourse to it, when it was enacted that heretics in religion should be dealt with by the secular authority. Yet, as far down as the tenth century, action of this extreme kind was partial, and resort to it depended on the temper and spirit of the Bishops.

But, at the period with which we are now concerned, namely, the early part of the thirteenth century, heresy was making itself heard. Its utterances were bolder, and by faithful Catholics recourse was had to sterner measures for its curtailment, and indeed for its extirpation ; the mere anathematising of heretics by the recently

held Fourth Lateran Council being found to be insufficient. It is interesting to note that at the very beginning of the previous century we find public profession made of opinions almost identical with those promulgated by the leaders of the Reformation, and widely held by Protestants; and one cannot refrain from inquiry concerning the first and necessarily obscure traces of such professions in the life of the Church.

We have already seen how the corruption of the Church, and the irregularities of its ministers, enlisted the anxious attention and called forth the rebuke of some of the worthiest of the Catholic clergy; and therefore it is no matter of wonder to find such charges figuring very prominently in the attacks of all fearless opponents of the Church. Notably was this the case with one Pierre de Bruys, who, about the year 1110, became known as a heretical preacher in the south of France, in the districts of Provence and Languedoc.

In addition to his attacks on Church discipline, his followers were credited with the rejection of Infant Baptism, the destruction of all Crucifixes, the denial of the Real Presence in the Eucharist, and with the refusal to regard the good works of the living as in any way efficacious for the salvation of the dead. But it was what Catholics regarded as his desecration of the crucifix that kindled their fiercest antagonism against him; and it resulted that in a district in Languedoc,

some twenty years after he had begun to preach, the Catholics passionately resented such an instance of what, in their eyes, could be nothing but sacrilege ; they rose against him, and Pierre de Bruys was there and then consigned to the flames.

And yet another fearless heretic, Henry by name, came forth from the north of Italy to take up the unfinished work of Pierre de Bruys. His disciples were known as Henricians, and the success of their appeals through all the south of France from Lausanne to Bordeaux is evidenced from the interference of the ruling Pope, Eugenius III, who sent a special legate, and ordered St. Bernard to support him in the district where heresy had become prominent. St. Bernard has left on record his testimony to the effect that 'The Churches are without people, the people without priests, 'the priests without honour, and Christians without Christ.' The great influence of St. Bernard recalled the people of the locality to their allegiance to Rome. Bernard pursued Henry, who had fled for refuge to Toulouse. There the heretic was seized, carried to Rheims a prisoner, and condemned by the Pope ; and soon after, in the year 1148, we hear of him as dying in his dungeon of privation and of fatal sickness.

But notwithstanding failures and terrors such as these, heretical opinion had spread so widely that the question came to be asked, not where

heresy was, but where it was not? Thought was stirring, its power was quickening, and the issue was that, to the regret of the great Church that aimed ever at universal empire, there appeared the names not merely of individuals, but of little companies of heretics, rising into prominence and really gaining a footing not in southern France only, but in North Italy, in Germany, and in Flanders also. Of all these it is to be remarked that the first objects of their attack on the Church were the temporal dignities, and the material wealth and luxury of her clergy; but we find every one of these small sects denying the efficacy of Infant Baptism. They denied also the doctrines of Purgatory and of the Intercession of Saints; and, most significant of all, they solemnly declared that they would accept those truths only which they held to be positively declared by Christ, or by his Apostles.

To all Protestants to-day it must surely be a matter of deep and very tender interest to call to mind the name assumed by one of these little companies of faithful men. They called themselves the 'Cathari,' and, translated into our tongue, that means no more nor less than 'Puritans.' The spirit and the aim of their protest may be inferred from such a designation; for as Waddington[1] says, 'The faintest glimmerings of reason were sufficient to light the mind to

[1] p. 353.

the detection of papal delinquency, and of the aberrations of the Church and its ministers. It required not a star in the East to indicate, even in those dark times, how distinct were the principles of the Church from the precepts of the gospel, or to contrast the deformities of the clergy with the purity of their heavenly Master.'

It is by a survey of this gathering power of heresy that we can adequately realize the anxiety it occasioned to the adherents of the Catholic Church, and in this further survey we come upon the name of a man well remembered for his work and doctrine. He was a wealthy merchant of the city of Lyons, named Peter Waldus, or Waldensis. Moved by a spirit of devotion, he distributed his wealth to the poor, and causing the four Gospels to be translated from Latin into French, he disseminated them among the people, gained great influence, and inaugurated an association for the diffusion of scriptural truth. In the course of his missionary work we find him crossing into the valleys of Piedmont ; and there he meets with a simple people called the Vaudois, whose Latin designation bore a curious likeness to his own name. They were known as the Waldenses—'the men of the valleys'—but they must have been living there some three centuries before Peter, the merchant of Lyons, came among them. He found the faith and the life of these people to be in marked accord with his own, and for an estimate

of these things we turn to the account given of them by a monk, Saccho by name, who had once been one of them, but subsequently turned to be their persecutor. From this source we learn that 'there is no sect so dangerous,' and that because 'it is the most ancient: some say as ancient as the Apostles themselves.' We learn from him too that 'there is no country where this sect has not gained some footing.' In addition to this, their critic objects to them on the ground that 'they live justly before men, and believe nothing respecting God which is not good'; 'only,' he says, 'they blaspheme against the Roman Church and clergy, and thus gain many followers.'[1] In many points, it may be safely asserted, their doctrines were those of the Reformers, if indeed in their estimate of the attributes of the Creator they did not rise to a higher spiritual appreciation of God than did Luther and his co-religionists. It does not surprise us to find Peter of Lyons in antagonism with the Pope, by whose influence, it is sufficient to say, he was expelled from his native city, driven into Dauphiné, and chased thence into Picardy. Expelled from there, he passed into Germany, and finally, finding a refuge in Bohemia, the poor worn-out fugitive, in the year 1180, passed away in peace among the ancestors of John Huss and Jerome of Prague.

One seat of heresy we have found in the

[1] Waddington, p. 359.

valleys of Piedmont; but it appeared, and with a more threatening aspect, in the cities of Languedoc. The people were known as the Albigeois, or Albigenses, from their association with the southern French city of Albi; and they were the more powerful from the protection extended to them by Raymond the Count of Toulouse. We may well regard the faith of these Albigenses as in advance of their day. In the services of religion they rejected all ceremonies and sacraments. They valued only religion in the heart. The papal estimate of them may be seen from the decree of Pope Alexander III, 'Let no man afford them refuge on his estates; neither let there be any communication with them in buying and selling; so that, being deprived of the solace of human conversation, they may be compelled to return from error to wisdom.' This condemnation was issued in the year 1163, when, in accordance with the spirit of such a decree, the Albigenses were pursued with anathemas, and denied the rites of Christian burial. But the correction of heresy was now to be exercised by the firmer hand of Pope Innocent III, and the full weight of that hand the Albigenses and their friend Count Raymond were soon to feel.

We find Innocent roundly upbraiding the Bishops in those provinces for a deplorable lack of zeal; but before commencing the conflict, which he felt to be approaching, the Pope sent into

the district two legates, to inquire, to advise, and to warn the people of the consequences of their alienation from the Church.

We have to remember that these southern provinces of France formed the home of the Troubadours. Their quick and witty countrymen cared seemingly as much for the joys of poetry and of music as for the dignified ritual of the Church. It is a fact that the name of a priest had come to be a byword amongst them. Their spirits were too lightsome for all the papal warnings. Soon however a graver menace found expression in the person and the preaching of the resolute and gloomy monk Dominic, who gave himself to the service of the Pope and the Church. A numerous array of ecclesiastics supported Dominic's appeal, but for a brief while in vain; the jest went round, and all the laughter was at the expense of these liegemen of papal authority. To these spiritual missionaries the name of 'Inquisitors' was given; they were enjoined to quicken the civil power, and rest content with nothing less than capital punishment upon these heretics wherever that might be possible. But the fact remains, that in whatever tone the emissaries of the Pope might speak, their message failed, and the men of Provence and Languedoc repented not of their heresy.

To the wrathful and indignant surprise of the men of Toulouse, Innocent invoked the arms of

the King of France ; for henceforth nothing but fire and sword were to be the arguments he would employ. By the quick temper of the people he had begun to menace, fuel was but added to the fire. One of the Papal Legates, or we may say 'Inquisitors,' fell a victim to assassination. On the instant the Pope laid the blame on Count Raymond, of Toulouse, on whom fell the sentence of excommunication, and the Pope declared a crusade against the Albigenses. For the first time in history, then, that word is applied to the fratricidal strife of Christian against Christian.

As in the struggle with the Saracen, so now papal Indulgences and Dispensations were proclaimed for all who should take part therein. Monks and ecclesiastics might direct the conflict, but the military agent in it was Simon de Montfort, a man of whom the historian Hallam bitterly says that his 'intrepidity, hypocrisy, and ambition marked him for the hero of a holy war.'

Against the trained warriors that followed De Montfort, the resisting power of Troubadour-land was as the velvet glove to the steel gauntlet. The Count of Toulouse, alarmed for his people, offered submission under even humiliating conditions ; but the dogs of war once let slip could not be recalled, for there was booty to be won by the troops, and honour for their leader. De Montfort was dazzled with the illusion of sitting enthroned as the new Count of Toulouse. And so the strife

went on, sorrowfully for the Albigenses it must be admitted, but not so well either as the soldiers of the Papacy could have desired. De Montfort found not a throne, but a grave at Toulouse ; and the young Count Raymond succeeded his father, who had died worn out with trouble and disappointment.

Succeeding Popes in due course filled Innocent's place, but the conflict was undecided still. After an unreal truce, a fresh crusade against the devoted city of Toulouse was proclaimed ; the sword of Louis of France was drawn on behalf of the Church, and when, by what some might call a stratagem, the city unexpectedly passed into the possession of these Crusaders, a Council of the Church was summoned ; and there, in the year 1228, that Council of Toulouse secured a name in history by setting up the Inquisition.

The defence of the faith meant simply the extirpation of heresy, and terrible and far-reaching were the Council's decrees. 'Those decrees,' the historian tells us,[1] 'obliged laymen, even of the highest rank, to close their houses, cellars, forests, against the heretical fugitives, and to take all means to detect and bring them to trial : heretics voluntarily converted were compelled to wear certain crosses on their garments ; those who should return to the Church under the influence of fear were still to suffer imprisonment at the discretion

[1] Waddington, p. 359.

of the bishop; all children at the age of twelve or fourteen were compelled by oath not only to abjure every heresy, but to expose and denounce any which they should detect in others; and this code of bigotry was properly completed by a strict prohibition to all laymen to possess any copies of the Scriptures.' Truly might it be said that at the consummation of this terrific persecution 'the remnant of the Albigenses was consigned without hope or mercy to the eager hands of the Inquisitors'; true too to the letter is the desponding cry of the sorrowful poet: 'O noble city of Toulouse! thy very bones are broken!'

Over the sufferings entailed on body and soul by this most dreaded agency, let us not dwell. Remembering that the Inquisition determined its own mode of procedure, swift, sure, secret, and awful as it was, let these solemn words of Dean Milman[1] content us:—'Nothing,' he declares, 'that the sternest or most passionate historian has revealed, nothing that the most impressive romance-writer could have imagined, can surpass the cold systematic treachery and cruelty of these so-called judicial formularies.' The charge against the victim, and the informers who preferred it, were for ever unknown to the poor accused soul. In the abject terror that enveloped the Holy Office and its Familiars, as the hooded monks that fulfilled its mandates were called, 'a man's

[1] 'Latin Christianity,' Vol. vi. p. 312.

foes' might verily be 'those of his own household' Indeed, information, true or false, against another was resorted to as a means of safety for a man's self! A son might arise against his father, and very literally a brother would be found delivering a brother to death. Never was the work of the informer in more frequent or more ghastly vogue, and deeds were done, which in the very worst days of the Cæsars would have made even a pagan tyrant blush for shame.

And yet, as the Apostle Paul so touchingly said in his own prison, 'the word of God is not bound.' The times have changed, the spirit of man has broadened, and tolerance and liberty have faithfully followed in the steps of advancing knowledge; while our very belief in man's spiritual and moral progress forbids the fear that these days and deeds of darkness ever can return again.

As our great poet says, 'We do pray for mercy, and that same prayer doth teach us all to render the deeds of mercy!' Not a church nor a sect is there that dares to set itself above that thought. Catholic and Protestant are wiser than they were; both know alike that terrors die, and passion burns itself away, but love abides, and grows too, as it breathes the freer air of modern days. Old times, old prejudices, and old oppressions have for ever passed away.

VIII

THE COUNCIL OF CONSTANCE, A.D. 1414

Even a brief survey of the events which marked the century preceding the assembly of the Council of Constance, in the year 1414, will suffice to show that the greatest days of the Papacy had passed away. Its supreme influence in things spiritual and temporal also, not only claimed but exercised, for nearly a century and a half, from the days of Gregory VII to the death of Innocent III, began to weaken just in proportion as the Church troubled herself with the rivalries and the contentions of 'the kingdoms of this world.'

Great pontiffs, such as those just named, won honour for Rome by the very greatness of their proud pretensions. These claims, it is true, became less pronouncedly spiritual as the Roman hierarchy became more suffused with the spirit of ecclesiasticism; but even this involved that pride of place and pomp of ritual, which for a time encircled its representatives with honour and with awe. But the days were hastening on when

the spiritual chief was too much hidden beneath the characteristics of the earthly prince. The conviction began to strengthen that, after all, Popes were but men, and that in their outreaching after worldly power they too must be content to part with immunity from the sorrows of unsatisfied ambition, and from the shocks and perils attendant upon all who take their cause to the arbitrament of strife. In short, the faithful historian and the worthiest among the Catholics themselves would unite in deploring and in deprecating the manifest decadence which was now beginning to mark the Papacy, the greatest and most widely honoured institution which this world, perhaps, may ever know.

It was no foreign foe that reduced its power to a lower plane; for, under the conditions of the time, it may be said that only Rome herself could have brought this change about.

In the earliest years of the fourteenth century we find King Philip of France successfully resenting and limiting the pretensions of the ruling Pope, Clement V; for, as Professor Bass Mullinger[1] says, we find that monarch 'eventually reducing the Roman See itself to be a mere instrument of his will, and a submissive agent in the furtherance of his policy.' Such was the result which challenged and nullified the declaration of one of the Popes (Boniface VIII) in the year 1302, 'that the

[1] Ency. Brit., Vol. xix. p. 501.

temporal sword was borne only at the will, and by the permission of the pontiff.'

We need no further witness to prove the decline of the mediæval papacy.

A new chapter in ecclesiastical history opens with the accession of the next Pope, Clement V, in the year 1305.

In addition to the uncompromising attitude towards the papal power assumed by the French king, account must also be taken of the preponderating influence of the French cardinals, who formed the majority in the Council entrusted with the election of the pontiff. It is not surprising therefore that a man of French extraction, born in Aquitaine, and at that time Archbishop of Bordeaux, was raised to the throne of St. Peter. The point to be especially borne in mind is the overwhelming power of France. As an inducement to the new Pope to place confidence in the support of that power, he can have found but little peace in Rome itself. That city was convulsed with the sanguinary strife of rival factions, due to the jealousies of the noble houses of the Orsini, on the one side, and the Colonna on the other.

The resolution now taken by the Pope may have been due to a natural desire to transfer the seat of his spiritual power to a more peaceful and a safer scene, or it might have been due to the strong pressure put upon him by the King of

France ; but the fact remains that Pope Clement quitted Rome with all his Court, and took up his residence in the city of Avignon, in the south of France, in the year 1309. There for a period of almost seventy years, described by some writers ironically as 'the Babylonish captivity,' seven Popes, and every one of them a Frenchman, successively held sway.

It is easy to see how, by this migration of the pontiff and the princes of the Church, the prestige and the influence of the city of Rome were diminished.

Jealousy, it is needless to say, wrought sleepless antagonism between French and Italian interests. The predominance of France, so long asserting itself, raised up opponents to her in other nations, until at last Italy succeeded in electing an Italian, in the person of Pope Urban VI, who made Rome the seat of his power in the year 1378, when it was hoped that the authority of St. Peter's Chair would be permanently exercised from the Vatican. Rome rejoiced too, for other than spiritual reasons. The drawbacks inflicted on the material prosperity of the city are fully realisable in view of the pilgrimages, embassies, and appeals which had been wont to find their way to Rome, but which had for so lengthened a period been diverted to Avignon. Something more than national exultation must have filled the excited cry, raised loudly while the sacred College was sitting, and the elec-

tion was yet uncertain, 'We will have a Roman for Pope, or at least, at the very least, an Italian!' Such a qualification was found in the person of Pope Urban VI, and it was fondly hoped that the sorrows of the faithful were ended. But the self-assertion and arrogance of the new pontiff proved a trouble to himself, and a rock of offence to the very cardinals who had elected him. As an escape from their action they raised the plea that they had given their support under intimidation.

They ignored Urban VI, and they proceeded to elect another of their number, Robert of Geneva, known in history as Pope Clement VII. No graver dislocation in the history of the Western Church was ever experienced than that occasioned by the great schism, consequent upon the election of two rival pontiffs. The disadvantages thereby accruing to the Church of Rome were incalculable. Where, it came to be asked, was the spirit of the Lord to be found, when these two opposing leaders of the Church were not only hurling anathemas at each other, but actually drifting into war? No wonder that men's reason was busy, and that their indignation was great; for in the grouping of the powers of Europe around these centres of spiritual authority, it must be admitted that a feeling of jealousy against the predominance of France was an undoubted factor. Italy, Germany, Bohemia, England, Flanders, Hungary, and Poland stood fast 'in obedience' to Urban, the

Roman Pope, whereas Scotland, Lorraine, and finally the Spanish kingdoms threw in their lot with France, in allegiance to Clement VII, the seat of whose authority was established, as in former days, at Avignon.

And thus the open scandal of antagonism within the great infallible church continued, until the shame and the sorrow of it resulted in an attempt to induce both these rivals to resign their power, and so end the contention which had saddened Christendom for some eight and thirty years.

Suffice it is to say that these overtures were rejected, or evaded by the reigning rival Popes. And then the Cardinals attached to both parties came to the decision to summon a general Council at Pisa. Amidst the divisions of Churchmen that Council was anticipated as expressive of the unity of the Church, whilst within that Church a power was held to exist transcending that of an individual Pope. Necessarily men began to consider the question of that same papal authority. The cardinals assumed that no Pope did in fact then exist: and 'that, under such circumstances, if the necessities of the Church demanded it, the cardinals had full power to call a Council.'[1] The two schismatics were deposed and cut off from the Church; and a supreme pontiff, Alexander V, was elected. The leaders of the Church had recourse, on this occasion, to the representatives of

[1] Waddington, p. 529.

learning and theology in the Universities of Paris, and of Oxford, and they boldly acted in accordance with the decision of those bodies, that it was right and legal to call a general Council, even in direct opposition to the expressed will of the Pope, and that when such a Council was assembled the voice of that Council really transcended the power of the individual Pope. The influence of the Mediæval Papacy must have greatly waned to present so marked a contrast to the position it had held some two centuries and a half previously.

The work of reunion, then, was commenced by this Council of Pisa, but, as is well known, it was not perfectly completed till some forty years after, when Nicolas V secured the united allegiance of Christendom.

The Council of Pisa adjourned its proceedings for a space of three years, when they were to be resumed at a Council summoned, for convenience, at a place so central as the city of Constance; and it met in the year 1414. Its members addressed themselves avowedly to two objects: firstly, the extinction of the papal schism, and secondly, the reform of the Church.

For the last, and greatly needed, purpose the appeals of some of the worthiest of the Church's representatives were strong indeed. It is with the name of the Pope then reigning, John XXIII, that the grave abuse of selling 'Indulgences' is said to have first arisen. No one had more

loudly condemned the condition to which the life of the Church had lapsed than the cardinal of Cambrai. Another loyal Churchman, Nicholas of Clemangi, addressed this very Council of Constance to the effect that the schism and desolation of the Church could only be ascribed to the manifest ungodliness of its pastors. In Germany, again, Henry of Langenstein exposed the unworthiness of priests and monks, holding the cathedrals to be no better than dens of robbers, and the monasteries than taverns. From Italy, and from Spain as well, came earnest protests against the then existing state of things; and, in short, the one point of attack was the carelessness, the self-indulgence, the unquestionable degeneracy of the clergy.

It is to be noted that by this Council a College of Reform was established, but the inaction of the successor to John XXIII, whom this Council had actually deposed, rendered the scheme of none effect, while the assembled Church dignitaries found it an easier and a more congenial task to crush out heresy, even by resort to fire and sword, than to amend their faults and quicken their own efforts in the true service of righteousness and religion. To these good ends no voice was more faithfully uplifted than that of the English Bishop, Hallam, of Salisbury; and dying, as he did, during the sitting of the Council, his death entailed the severest loss on the party of reform.

To this same desirable end an influence had been

going forth from our own country for something like a century, and that influence arose from the attitude and teaching of John Wyclif. Especially was his name known and honoured in Bohemia; for the Queen of Richard the Second, Isabella, was a Bohemian princess, and into her old home, on her widowhood, she brought the works of John Wyclif. The first rise therefore of heresy in Bohemia must be referred to the incentive given by the writings of our great countryman.

Some fifteen years before the meeting of the Council of Constance we find a learned doctor, John Huss, appointed as Dean of the Philosophical Faculty in the University of Prague. He was Confessor to Sophia, the Queen of Bohemia, and had been permitted to preach, in the language of the people, in his chapel at Prague. Most frequently his solemn theme was the corruption of the Court of Rome, her 'indulgences,' and her exactions. His utterances gained the most enthusiastic welcome from his eager listeners; and yet up to that time he was held free—even by the testimony of his own Archbishop—from all charges of heresy.

But it could not be that such a spirit as that of Huss should remain free from antagonism to the proceedings of such a Pope as then ruled the Church, and who sent forth his emissaries to preach a crusade against his neighbour the King of Naples, accompanied, of course, by the accus-

tomed promises of indulgence to all who took part therein.

Huss vehemently opposed such preaching; feeling ran high; three of the followers of Huss were seized, imprisoned, and privately done to death; and the Bohemian clergy, almost to a man, banded themselves together in support of the Church against John Huss and his dangerous doctrines. He received a summons to appear before the Pope's tribunal at the Vatican. He disregarded the citation. Speedily he received a similar mandate to attend the Council at Constance. That command he set himself instantly and fearlessly to obey; the more willingly from the fact that he obtained from the then reigning Emperor, Sigismund, a safe-conduct 'which was understood to be a pledge for his personal safety during the whole period of his absence from Bohemia.'[1] With good reason the accused might rely on such a pledge, when the Pope himself had asserted, 'Though John Huss should murder my own brother, I would use the whole of my power to preserve him from every injury during all the time of his residence at Constance.'

Huss was of too noble a spirit to believe that the Council would plead that it had itself given no safe-conduct, and that its honour was therefore unpledged; but the truth is that although the Pope might deprecate, and the Emperor dis-

[1] See Waddington, p. 589.

claim, all share in such an act, only a month after his arrival in Constance he was thrown into prison and kept under the constant surveillance of his adversaries, to be brought at last before the Council rather for condemnation than for trial.

His admiration for Wyclif and his work he had cherished secretly in his own heart, but he could not rest long without letting his feelings be known. It was a prayer of Huss that when he died he might find entrance where Wyclif's soul had gone before him, for he held him, he was wont to say, a good and holy man, and truly worthy of heaven. In fact, the charge against Huss was generally that of complicity with the heretical doctrines of the English Reformer.

Some forty-five distinct charges of heresy were presented against Huss; but though he doubtless shared some of Wyclif's opinions, it is noticeable that the charges finally made against him were three: namely, for his teachings that when pontiffs or earthly rulers enriched the Church they did evil to it; that personal transgression disqualifies any ecclesiastic, whether Pope or priest, for administering the sacraments; and that tithes are not dues but gifts of charity, and are entirely of the nature of free-will offerings. Huss's line of defence was precisely that adopted by Wyclif before him, and by Luther and his contemporaries in after days. It was an appeal from Pope and Church to the words of Scripture. Making that

appeal to Scripture, his voice was drowned in the angry opposition with which he was met; but it is nevertheless on record that he declared, 'I am ready to retract these opinions when I am better instructed by the Council.' He was however, from the first, made to feel that the province of the Council was not to argue but to decide; 'to command obedience to its decision or to enforce the penalty.'[1] There was on no account to be a public disputation; another plan was followed: he was troubled, persecuted, by private questionings, and these again were too often accompanied by threats and insults. Yet nothing moved him, for he 'was prepared,' he said, 'to afford an example in himself of that enduring patience which he had so frequently preached to others, and which he relied upon the grace of God to grant him.' Set once more before the Council his pleas were provocative of nothing but cries of derision. Even the Emperor Sigismund stood forward as his foe, declaring 'that among the errors of Huss, which had been in part proved, and in part confessed, there was not one which did not deserve the penal flames.' Condemned, sent back to his dungeon, harassed by his enemies' entreaties to lay aside his heresies, the man stood firm. Over such a spirit his foes had no power; yet one test harder than all others was awaiting him, and that was the tender, the affectionate appeal of one Bohemian

[1] See Waddington, p. 593.

Noble, John of Chlum, who had ever been his disciple and his friend. If any prayers might move the soul of Huss from its lofty purpose, it was such as rose from a friendly heart. When all other pleas had failed to shake his constancy, 'My dear master,' cried his loving follower, 'I am unlettered, and consequently unfit to counsel one so enlightened as you. Nevertheless if you are secretly conscious of any one of those errors which have been publicly imputed to you, I do entreat you not to feel any shame in retracting it; but if, on the contrary, you are convinced of your innocence, I am so far from advising you to say anything against your conscience, that I exhort you rather to endure every form of torture than to renounce anything you hold to be true.' There spoke the true friend, and to him Huss made answer through his tears 'that God was his witness, how ready he had ever been, and still was, to retract on oath, and with his whole heart, from the moment he should be convicted of any error *by evidence from holy Scripture.*'[1]

Never did braver, or gentler, more fearless, or more humble martyr tread the way that leadeth unto life. When Sigismund bade them commit him to the flames, as they leapt up round him he said but these words, 'Lord Jesus, I endure with humility this cruel death for thy sake, and I pray thee pardon all my enemies.' The chariot of

[1] Waddington, p. 594.

fire was at hand, and this faithful witness for God, for righteousness and for truth, was soon at rest.

Ere another year had passed, this Council of Constance doomed Jerome of Prague to the same dark fate as that which made the glory of Huss's constancy the more apparent.

The cry of the best men in the great Catholic Church for reform was met by this Council in the fiercest spirit of reaction ; and this in such ruthless fashion that they who had regard to the highest interests of their Church might well say, in that hope deferred which maketh the heart sick, ' How long, O Lord ? how long ? ' ' Truth is fallen in the street and uprightness cannot enter ! ' ' Help, Lord ! for the faithful fail from among the children of men ! '

IX

THE COUNCIL OF TRENT, A.D. 1545

In recording the proceedings of the Council of Trent, it is difficult to say whether they possess the greater interest for the student of theology or for the historian.

The sixteenth century was notably an age of discovery and of invention, rich with promises of progress for the world.

The voyages of daring navigators like Vasco da Gama, who led his fleet into the Indian seas, and Columbus, who died in poverty and neglect, after triumphantly revealing to Europe the lands beyond the Western ocean, were beginning to bear fruit. The long smouldering discontent at the Church's teaching and discipline broke fiercely into flame, and the Reformation became an established fact.

Gutenberg, by his printing-press, set up in the previous century, was giving wings to the words of fearless men, and in this sixteenth century the seeds of religious reform were being scattered far and wide among the nations.

Amid the landmarks with which history has studded this period must be set the emphatic reassertion of doctrine, of discipline, and of authority by the Church of Rome. Such was her answer to the revolt against her, led by Luther; and so high was the spirit in which his attack was met by the representatives of Rome, so marked was the recovery of papal authority, and the unification of the Church's teaching, that historians found themselves justified in describing the movement resulting therefrom as a Counter-Reformation wrought by the Catholic Church itself.

Now of this movement, the Council of Trent, which assembled in the year 1545, may be taken as the sure and successful expression.

By delays and adjournments the deliberations of this assembly were protracted for no less than eighteen years. The sessions were influenced by considerations not only theological, but also political.

High-minded and tolerant Catholics, such as Cardinal Gonzaga or Cardinal Pole, were keenly alive to the real need of improvement of Church discipline and life. Such voices were faithfully uplifted for reform from within, but the weight of Jesuit opinion and feeling, born of enthusiastic submission to the Holy See, was cast in favour of those who thought the old ways better, and who stood fast upon the old doctrines. In memory we catch the echoes not only of warm debate between

learned ecclesiastics, but of the tread of armed hosts, whose alternating successes and defeats were reflected in the varying attitude assumed from time to time by Churchmen towards each other. Nor were the spiritual and temporal leaders of the Protestant movement, absent though they were from the Council, without sure influence upon its deliberations.

Acting on behalf of the spiritual interests of the laity, the attitude of that laity could not be ignored. The members of the Council were constrained to take account of the personal feelings and aims of an Emperor like Charles V. They were troubled by an anxiety, which they could not fail to feel, at the success with which, after his conversion, or as his opponents would term it, his perversion, to the Protestant side, Maurice of Saxony won, by force of arms, safety and toleration for the Reformers. From the twilight of mediæval life Europe was turning to the dawn of a more progressive time. Attacks on faults chargeable to the representatives of the Church, had, as history makes clear to us, become fierce and frequent. There was the gravest need that Churchmen should set their house in order, and it was increasingly felt that a most earnest attempt should be made to eradicate the remaining evil wrought by schism in the Popedom, and to purify and to quicken anew the life of the Church.

Wide expression was given to the desire for

summoning one of those great Councils, to which in her trials and difficulties the Church was wont to turn for reassurance. But the conditions with which the Papacy found itself beset in the sixteenth century were vastly different from those with which, in former times, Rome had been called upon to deal. In earlier days she had tried to purge herself from much that threatened to weaken the loyalty of her devoted adherents. Previous Councils concerned themselves with differences between members of the same household of faith. But the next great Council was convened when the enemy was at her gates, for failure after failure had befallen those who would have reformed her from within; and all these ineffectual efforts 'hastened,' as Dr. Littledale says, 'the crash of the Reformation.'

The Church's foes were no longer those of her own household, but there were existing in England, in Germany, and in Switzerland, companies of religionists in open and uncompromising antagonism to the older Church. The task before Rome was indeed a hard one. Whole nations were estranged from her; and the effort demanded from her was that involved in the endeavour to win her revolted children back again.

Now it is to be noted that Pope Leo X expressed his condemnation of Martin Luther and his teachings by publishing against the Reformer a Bull, so called from the Latin word 'Bulla,'

signifying a heavily embossed seal, which when once attached to a document was regarded as confirming and emphasizing its contents. And it is interesting to remark, that against this utterance of the Pope, Luther made appeal for a general Council of the Church, that might hear and judge his position. Catholics themselves had begun to feel very strongly that a dangerous crisis was threatening, and Luther's plea was supported by the Emperor Charles V, and by the Princes of Germany, Protestant as well as Catholic.

But within and without the Church, feelings adverse to the calling of such a Council found quick expression.

There were devoted Catholics who would brook no change whatever. There was a reforming party with which the English cardinal, Reginald Pole, was associated, who feared that, in a Council, votes enough would be found to nullify all efforts at reform.

There were the German Princes, who could not tolerate the predominance of Italian prelates, and refused to accept Rome as the place of meeting. And even when the ruling Pope, Clement VII, proposed, as an alternative, Mantua or Milan, that offer was rendered vain by his declaration that 'no theological questions upon which the Church had spoken should be reopened.'

The next Pope, Paul III, on the other hand, thought the meeting-place should be Mantua, but

alienated the Protestants by declaring that it should be held nowhere in Germany. However, largely on account of the wise and tactful influence of one of the cardinals—Contarini—a more harmonious spirit was created. It is true that the Protestants viewed with some misgiving the Pope's subsequent suggestion that the Council should meet at Trent, in the Tyrol, for they doubted whether even that meeting-place was far enough removed from Italian influence; but political reasons brought the friendly aid of Charles V to the side of the Protestants, with the result that this great historical Council, convoked by Pope Julius III, held its first session at Trent, in the month of December, 1545. The earliest vote determining the order of procedure, was to the effect that votes should be recorded not by nations but by individuals, and this from the first gave great advantage to the Italian bishops.

As indicative of the faith dear to those assembled, it is enough to say that, at an early period of the proceedings, the members of the Council heartily joined in reciting the Creed adopted by the Fathers of the Church who met at Nicæa and at Constantinople, a creed described as 'that firm and only foundation against which the gates of hell shall not prevail.'

Before assembling for another session, Martin Luther had passed to his rest; while in the changing exigencies of political life, the Emperor

Charles V was found preparing to crush the reformers in Germany by force of arms.

The Pope was informed by his representatives that the Council generally inclined to the consideration of the improvement demanded by Church life and discipline; and that, in view of the grave necessity for this, the discussion of points of doctrine might be undertaken subsequently. But such a desire was checked, and the Council was directed to the consideration of the Canon of Scripture.

Of all the decrees published by the Council of Trent, none was of greater interest or import than its pronouncement on this subject.

It was debated, in the first place, whether all the books were to be alike regarded and accepted? That question received a speedy answer in the affirmative. It was agreed also, in reply to the question as to whether there should be a fresh inquiry into this canonical character before giving such approval, that a private examination of the evidence should be made, but that no statement thereon should be entered on the acts of the Council. Again the Council debated whether any distinction should be drawn between the books, as being some of them read merely for moral instruction and others for proving the doctrines of Christian belief; and the Council determined that there should be no such distinction made. The result of the discussion was the publication

of two decrees on this important subject. The first decree declared that Scripture and Tradition are to be received and venerated equally, and this, too, under pain of the Church's anathema for a disregard of it. The second decree proclaimed the Vulgate—the version of the Scriptures translated into the Latin tongue by Jerome in the latter part of the fourth century—'to be the sole authentic and standard Latin version. It gave it such authority as to supersede the original texts; forbade the interpretation of scripture contrary to the sense received by the Church, or even contrary to the unanimous consent of the Fathers, and made licences to read any Biblical manuscript compulsory.'[1]

Strange it is, and sad too, to find at this juncture the Emperor and the Pope together concerting warlike measures against the Protestants of Germany, simply on the unreal ground that these had refused submission to the Council. From that moment reconciliation was an impossibility. How Charles made successful war on those heretical subjects of his; how to the surprise of every one, and most of all to the Pope, he befriended them when they were at his mercy; and how the Pope sought to remove the Council from Trent to Bologna, where his influence might be more secure against a coalition of French, German, and Spanish bishops, are matters of history; while

[1] Ency. Brit.: 'Council of Trent.'

it certainly stands to the Emperor's credit that his summons called back the papal legates who had actually quitted Trent, and that he prevailed upon Catholics and Lutherans to agree upon a message of peace to the reassembled Council—a message, alas! to which no effective response was given.

A quarrel between the Pope and the King of France caused the withdrawal of all the French bishops from the Council, and the result was that increased influence was gained by the Italian party. Thence resulted decrees pressed on, in the absence of the Protestants, who had been urged by the Emperor's party to attend, but who were wisely waiting for a safe-conduct. While that safe-conduct lacked clearness, while the Protestants could count on safety 'only as far as lay in the Council's power,' matters of doctrine were determined, the doctrine of Transubstantiation was solemnly reasserted. Touching the Eucharist, the chalice was refused to the laity. The contention of the Reformers was that they could claim the cup by divine right and could not be debarred from it without sin. Such a position, it is needless to say, was unanimously condemned.

But no Protestants were yet at the Council, for the decree granting a perfectly safe-conduct was postponed, though a body of Protestant divines were reported as being some forty miles off waiting

for it. But at all events their petition was sent on before them. They prayed for a postponement of doctrinal debate, and fearlessly demanded that all matters so far settled at Trent should be reopened. They pleaded that the Pope should not, through his legates, preside; they contended that he should be the first to set an example by his own self-submission to the Council, while the Bishops should for the time be held free of their oath of allegiance to the Pope, in order that they might have at that Council the most perfect liberty of speech and action. Still the safe-conduct was held as insecure, while it is significant to hear of an unwise utterance by a zealous Dominican, who preached in the Cathedral at Trent, upon the subject of the tares and the burning of them. But the Protestants never participated in the Council, and this for other reasons than their mistrust of a questionably drawn safe-conduct.

The sittings of the Council were unexpectedly cut short, for to the surprise of the Emperor Charles, Maurice of Saxony, once the rising hope of the Catholic party, suddenly changed sides. He declared for the Protestants, swept like a tempest into the Tyrol, defeated Charles, and shut him within the walls of Innspruck. Terror-stricken at the threatening perils of war, the Council was bent on flight. Its members had consulted and debated together for some seven years; but now, in April, 1552, it held a brief session, declared its

sittings suspended for two years, and seemed to have become altogether a matter of history.

But the story of the Council of Trent is as yet far from being wholly told. Other experiences waited on its reassembly, for reassembled it was after seven more eventful years in European history. Popes had risen and passed. One, by name Marcellus II, a pontiff giving promise of wise and gentle bearing to all men, gave place after a reign of three short weeks to a stern, ascetic, but high-minded successor, in Paul IV, who fixed the Inquisition in Rome, who knew naught but impatience with the rising liberty of the Protestants, opposed with all his strength every effort after doctrinal reform, and viewed with unalloyed dislike the possible reassembly of the Council of Trent. But that was left to his successor, Pius IV, and he, in spite of difficulties that might have daunted many, convoked anew the Council of Trent, which after its long adjournment reassembled in the year 1560. In reply to the papal summons Spain hesitated, and delayed in its acceptance. France, it is true, readily obeyed the call; but from the Princes of Germany there came a refusal to associate themselves with any Council that rejected the authority derivable from an appeal to Scripture, and which denied to the Protestants who might attend the right of free discussion. Denmark declined the invitation, while the papal nuncio to the Court of Queen

Elizabeth was stopped on the other side of the Channel by the assurance that the message he had been commissioned to convey would be unheeded.

Since the Council had adjourned some eight years since, new personalities had come upon the scene; others, like the Emperor Charles, had quitted it. So widespread and so self-assured had the Reformation grown, that on the principle of action and reaction being equal and opposite, a similar spirit of self-reliance was kindled in the Roman Catholic Church. To the aid of that Church a new and an almost resistless source of strength was afforded by the uprise of the order of the Jesuits. Founded by Loyola some twenty-five years before the reassembling of the Council, and declaring its very first principle to be that of the most implicit obedience to the Holy See, we find without surprise that two of Loyola's closest and most trusted followers were chosen as the Pope's theologians at Trent. Remembering that some of the keenest and best trained intellects in all the Catholic communion were zealous servants of this great Order, we can understand how it speedily became, and still remains, one of the most effective stays of the Church of Rome. It made its influence felt amongst earthly rulers, and through them directed the government of their subjects. This was the new force that brought fresh vigour and renewed confidence to the whole Catholic world.

When the Council of Trent reassembled, it was characterized by a different spirit. There was to be no temporizing with heresy, no compromise whatever with Protestant Princes. The Pope was to be pre-eminent, and the Jesuits made him so; for when the question again arose as to Holy Communion, in both kinds, the Jesuit leader secured a decree referring the matter to the decision of the Pope, and by so doing indirectly, yet convincingly, decided the vexed question as to the relative superiority of the Pope and the Council, in favour of the Pope. Under the same influence the Council set itself to remedy what was held to be the injury done to the Church by the dissemination of Protestant literature. It relegated to a Commission the consideration of the question presented by the circulation of heretical books. As a result, the efforts of a recent Pope in securing a list of works deemed spiritually perilous were approved; and new machinery for that purpose, by the issue of an Index Expurgatorius, decreeing what books were not to be read, was in effect the Church's answer to the challenge of the printer.

So far from standing on her defence, we find the Church now declaring her doctrines, asserting her position, and aggressive in reply to the assaults of her opponents. There was no longer talk about safe-conducts, no parleying with her spiritual adversaries, the spirit infused into the Council was

that of irreconcilable antagonism toward foes, who should be swept altogether from her path. And all this was accompanied by so clear a statement of the Church's own position and doctrine as to make the decrees of the Council of Trent a source of reference, and of confidence for faithful Catholics down to the present time.

Such were the signal services rendered to the Papacy by the Jesuits. Their method, their attitude, their principles must be matters of serious and endless debate wherever Catholic and Protestant are found confronting each other. But in simple justice to the Order, it must not be forgotten that it was through their influence that the Council of Trent abolished the sale of Indulgences, an evil practice which was the immediate cause of Luther's own revolt from Rome.

The Society of Jesus, for all the charges brought against it, and all the suspicion which its action could not fail to inspire, can at least claim to be the chief agent in the removal of ecclesiastical abuses, by which the life of the Church was healthier in following years.

The last words of this historic assembly ere it separated finally in 1563 were those declaring that ' the authority of the Holy See is untouched by any decrees of the Council touching the reform of morals and of discipline.' To the papal authority the Council of Trent restored all that had been lost or obscured at previous Councils. That

authority might successfully appeal to the faithful within the Church's pale; but no obedience, or even recognition, could Protestant Europe ever give to the Head even of the most venerable of Churches, who sanctioned the nameless anguish of the Inquisition, looked only with satisfaction upon the awful tragedy of St. Bartholomew, sped the Armada on its way with the papal blessing on its hoped-for triumph, and mourned with no common sorrow when the free winds of heaven drove the ships of Spain upon the pitiless rocks, or whelmed them in the depths of the sea.

X

THE VATICAN COUNCIL, A.D. 1869

AFTER the reassembling of the Council of Trent, in the year 1560, and during all its subsequent proceedings, the influence of the Order of the Jesuits resulted not only in the renewed vigour of Church life and action, but also in the restoration to the Papacy of that power which for a lengthened period had been seemingly weakened or ignored. The maintenance and the unquestioned recognition of the authority of the Pope formed the purpose of which the members of the Society of Jesus never lost sight. The most devoted liegemen of an earthly monarch never showed greater loyalty than that which the Jesuits rendered to their spiritual and absolute lord, the supreme pontiff; and their untiring allegiance found its climax in their persistent, and at last successful, efforts to draw from the Princes and Prelates of the Church a decree establishing the stupendous dogma of the infallibility of the Pope. In season and out of season, the fidelity of the

Order was the same. Evil report as well as good report followed them, as history shows clearly enough. The object of the members of the Society in labouring for the universal acceptance of the Pope's temporal power, their intervention in the plans of Courts and Cabinets, and their influence on the international concerns of the people amongst whom they dwelt, resulted in trouble to the political powers of the time, and eventually to the Order itself.

When the great and popular French King, known as Henry of Navarrè, was slain by the assassin Ravaillac, the order of the Jesuits was banished subsequently by royal decree. It is true that Louis XIV readmitted them, but such was the political disturbance generated by their renewed interference, that in the eighteenth century they were not only again expelled from France, but they were banished as well from Spain, from Portugal, and from other Catholic States. At last even the Pope himself, Clement XIV, found them guilty of disturbing the international relationships of the powers of Europe. He charged them with disloyalty to the constitution established by their founder, and other accusations were laid against them; and by the decree of Clement the Order of the Jesuits was abolished, in the year 1773.

But the aim of the Order was not forgotten, and those to whom that aim was most acceptable

were found among the Italian prelates and ecclesiastics. These were the men of whom the more liberal French bishops spoke as dwelling beyond the mountains that formed the northern boundary of Italy; they were 'ultra montes,' and out of those two Latin words was coined a name which, from that day to this, represents that great ecclesiastical and political theory of the absolute monarchy of the Pope, known as 'Ultramontanism.'

In fact, it is another word for the high papal notions cherished by the Jesuits and supported by the great body of the Italian bishops and clergy. The precise authority of the Pope was a matter regarded as left somewhat indefinite, even by the Council of Trent; and this question, unsettled as it was, proved the cause of discussion between the French prelates, who leaned to the authority of a Church Council, and the Italian clergy who exalted that of the Pope. But the advocacy of the French bishops weakened and almost ceased. And that result, it must be acknowledged, was one of the unlooked-for issues of the great French Revolution. The French clergy bravely died beneath the guillotine, or fled for refuge to other lands that gave them kindly shelter. How many an empty Bishopric the Church mourned in France!

But Napoleon stilled the revolutionary storm with what Carlyle calls 'a whiff of grape-shot.'

In the day of his brief exaltation, Napoleon concluded an agreement with the reigning Pope, Pius VII. He, after forty years' suppression of the Jesuits, restored their Order in the year 1814, filled up the many vacant bishoprics in France with men of strong Italian and Ultramontane sympathies, and so, in France, the old cry of 'Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity' availed nothing before the renewed efforts of the Jesuits to free the powers of ecclesiasticism from every possible restraint, and to make the action taken by that authority both instant and effective.

The influence of the Jesuits then, it will be seen, was re-established in all its pristine potency, and they were free once more to prosecute their never-forgotten scheme for the erection of the Papacy into an absolute monarchy, not only spiritual but temporal.

No Roman Catholic ecclesiastic has given more frank or emphatic expression to such an aspiration than the late Cardinal Manning, who says,[1] 'There is not another Church so called, nor any community professing to be a Church, which does not submit, or obey, or hold its peace, when the civil governors of the world command.' 'The Catholic Church,' he further declares,[2] 'cannot be silent, it cannot hold its peace, it cannot cease to preach the doctrines of Revelation, not only of

[1] 'The Present Crisis of the Holy See,' p. 75. London, 1861.
[2] Page 73.

the Trinity and of the Incarnation, but likewise of the Seven Sacraments, and of the Infallibility of the Church of God; and of the necessity of unity, and of the sovereignty, both spiritual and temporal, of the Holy See.'

It is to be most seriously noted, therefore, that the spiritual and temporal authority of the Papacy is, without any limitation whatever, to be implicitly accepted, not merely as a human theory, however true, but as a veritable doctrine of Revelation. The conceptions and aims of the Ultramontane party in the Church of Rome could not be more emphatically or definitely expressed.

The Churchmen who shared these ideas were of the same school as those who did so much to advance the autocracy of the Pope by their efforts at the Council of Trent. Three hundred years afterwards, as the consistent successors of those men, they strove most earnestly and, as it proved, most successfully, for the assembly of a Council at the Vatican, which they fervently trusted would crown with completeness all their previous efforts, by the establishment of the universal supremacy of the Roman pontiff.

Alert but patient, the Ultramontanes waited a fit occasion for the advancement of their purpose. For, it must be observed, there was one important point wherein the Vatican Council differed from all the previous great Councils of the Church. All the Councils had been convened at the prayer

or desire of the Church. But this was not the case with the Vatican Council. So far was it from being demanded by Catholics generally, that the proposal to summon it was viewed by many with anxiety, if not with positive alarm.

The origination of it lay with the Pope alone, and the opportunity, so expectantly waited for by the Jesuits, was brought appreciably nearer by the elevation of Pope Pius IX to the papal throne in the year 1846. It must be admitted that the characteristics which marked this pontiff proved favourable to the long cherished purpose of the Ultramontane section of the Roman Catholic clergy. The Pope held a high conception of his prerogative, he was distinctly amenable to influence, he was, in fact, the very kind of instrument to prove effective under the skilful direction of the Jesuits.

Trial was made in two instances as to the length to which the Pope might be expected to go. A pronouncement of the Pope concerning the Immaculate Conception met naturally with no objection. A second declaration was made by Pius IX in the year 1864, and this was none other than the famous 'Syllabus of Errors,' the scope of which can be apprehended from its very title. To this papal utterance very little opposition was offered; but it is to be carefully noted that the majority of prelates composed of Italian bishops was as considerable and reliable as it had been

in the days of the Council of Trent, possibly more so, since a very large number of Bishops had been appointed by Pope Pius, and every one of them was a member of the Ultramontane party. To such a body of ecclesiastics the proposal of the Pope to summon a Council at once approved itself.

In the month of June, 1867, some five hundred Bishops gathered in Rome for the eighteen-hundredth anniversary of the martyrdom of Peter and Paul; and to that great company a public intimation of the Pope's resolve for a General Council was addressed. In the year following, an invitation was sent out not only to the dignitaries of the Catholic Church in the West, but to the Bishops of 'the Oriental rite'; in other words, Bishops of the Eastern Church; and to Protestants also an invitation was offered.

But, before an answer was given to the invitation, the pastors of the Eastern Church were required to declare that they accepted the Roman Catholic system in its entirety; while the Protestants were duly informed that they would be subjected to the instruction of 'experienced men,' that they might be led 'to realize and to repent of their theological errors.' It is needless to add that, in both of these instances, the papal invitation was declined.

By a papal Bull the Council was convoked for 8 December, 1869; but, as has been already

stated, even Catholic communities looked askance at it. The Bavarian foreign minister, Prince Hohenlohe, addressed to the European Courts a warning of possible political dangers attendant upon the holding of such a Council for the declaration of the Pope's Infallibility. The proposal was deprecated also by an assembly of German Catholic Bishops at Fulda.

But the Pope's resolve was taken, and just before the meeting of the Council at the Vatican, the Pope, by personally prescribing the method of procedure, made it clear that his will was to be paramount. At his express order, there could be brought before the Council no proposal whatever that was alien or in the slightest degree hostile to Roman Catholic tradition. To all, again, outside the Council the most rigid secrecy was to be observed; but the most conclusive evidence of the influence of the Pope is found in the fact that all the officials of the Council were to be elected, not by the Council, but solely by the Pope himself.

It was indeed a noteworthy company that assembled on the date fixed by Pope Pius IX: Bishops, Cardinals, Abbots, Generals of Orders—764 in all—or in other words, about three-fourths of the whole Roman Episcopate.

The minority, in whose eyes the proposal to declare the Pope infallible found no favour, numbered about 160; while it appears, on the

authority of Dr. Littledale, that of the large majority, three hundred, were the Pope's own personal guests.

Against that majority were ranged the German and the Austrian Bishops, with a large contingent of prelates from France, from Hungary, and from North America.

But the minority lacked the welding force of uniformity. Its members spoke not with the same voice, nor to the same purpose. Pressed and confused when face to face with the serried phalanx of Ultramontane feeling and belief, they went so far as to admit the binding character of a papal decree when uttered ex cathedra, and they allowed obedience to every decree of the See of Rome to be obligatory on all Christians. Confronted with such wavering opponents, it is not surprising that Cardinal Manning was followed by hundreds of enthusiastic and inflexible Ultramontanes when he strongly appealed for a definition of the new dogma of papal Infallibility which he was ready to welcome.

Free and full discussion, however, was rendered impossible by the acceptance of rules that cut short all lengthened debate, and allowed any ten members of the Council power to demand the closure.

One of the earliest pronouncements of the Council was a long declaration condemnatory of Modern Rationalism; but what is peculiarly

noteworthy in regard to that declaration is the fact that the form in which it was published was altogether without precedent. The form was that of a proclamation by the Pope personally, a significant expression being added thus—' the Sacred Council approving.'

The question of the relative superiority of Council or of Pope was in process of solution, and that too in accordance with the long cherished desire of the Jesuits. On 13 July, 1870, the Council recorded its decision upon the great questions laid before it by the Pope.

The members were asked to decree that St. Peter was personally and solely entrusted with primacy of jurisdiction over the whole Church ; that by divine institution and right that primacy was for ever vested in the line of the Roman pontiffs ; that all clergy and laity, both individually and collectively, are bound to submit themselves to this jurisdiction divinely bestowed upon the Pope ; that an appeal to any Council whatever from the decision of the Supreme Pontiff is simply unlawful ; and, finally, that when the Pope speaks ex cathedra, that is, in his office as Pope, and declares that any doctrine of faith or of morals is to be accepted by the Universal Church, the Pope is infallible.

Such were the momentous declarations which awaited the vote of the ecclesiastics, six hundred and seventy-one being assembled. They were

divided in their opinion, a minority of two hundred and twenty destroying that practical unanimity always held essential to the enacting of a dogmatic decree. This, however, was regarded but as a preliminary vote upon the great questions that were yet to receive a final and an authoritative confirmation at a future session.

But before that session was held, suddenly, after lodging a protest, all the Bishops constituting the minority left Rome. Although no definite statement is to be found as to the cause of their unexpected withdrawal, they must have felt most strongly that any further protest on their part would have been of no avail.

On 18 July, 1870, however, by a vote of five hundred and thirty-five prelates against two, the decree of papal Infallibility was finally confirmed by the Pope. Support was sought for that confirmation by the threat of excommunication against all who, directly or indirectly, might interfere with any ecclesiastical jurisdiction; and against all, too, who might impede or deter the officers of the Holy Office of the Inquisition in the execution of their duties.

The work of the Vatican Council was thus accomplished, but when men strove so earnestly, as did the Ultramontanes, for papal Infallibility, and believed with Cardinal Manning 'that on the destruction of the temporal power . . . the laws of nations would at once fall into ruins,' it is a

solemn sign of the inefficacy of their purpose and toil, that on the very day when the Council decreed the authority and infallibility of the Pope, Napoleon III, ' the eldest son of the Church,' as he was styled, recklessly and blindly flung down the gauntlet of war against Prussia, a foe as ready as she was resolute, with the result that she stretched out a strong hand of aid to Italy. The war of 1870, so disastrous to the Catholic ruler that had declared it, actually issued in the overthrow of the Temporal Power, and in the occupation of papal Rome by the troops of the King of Italy.

It must be admitted too, that in the realms of thought and faith the Vatican decrees lacked that permanent and wide acceptance hoped for by the majority of the Council.

It was determined that from the decision of the Pope appeal was impossible. To turn to reason would be to incur the ban pronounced on Rationalism. If a man presumed to traverse a declaration of the Pope by reference to the facts of history he would be chargeable with the erection of his private judgment against acknowledged infallibility. If he sought a justification from Scripture, he was guilty of the sin of heresy. Moreover, it lay with the Pope alone to say when his words were spoken ex cathedra, and when they were not. It was therefore useless to plead that the declarations of the Roman pontiff were

at variance with the utterances of any of his predecessors, for the Pope was in the right, through the power vested in him, if he declared that those predecessors were not speaking ex cathedra.

From those without the pale of the great Church whose claims, whose doctrines, and whose deeds history has disclosed to us, it would be an easy matter to collect opinions traversing with unreserved severity the record of her career. But, as a guide to our own judgment, it is more just to listen to the testimony of her own faithful adherents, in regard to the usefulness or the permanency of the work of such as those who took part in this last great Council.

The name of John Henry Newman is one that the Catholic Church holds in honour. The issue of the Vatican Council he regarded as 'a great calamity,' and he distinctly holds 'an aggressive insolent faction' as responsible for it. It is within the recollection of many that he went so far as to address a letter to the leader of the English Catholic nobility, the Duke of Norfolk, in which he enumerated certain instances in which he would disobey the Pope's command. Supposing himself to be gravely exercised by such a mandate, he says, 'I should look to see what theologians could do for me, what the bishops and clergy around me, what my confessor, what friends whom I revered; and if, after all, I could not take their view of the matter, then I must

rule myself by my own judgment and my own conscience.' Surely such a position, so taken up, is utterly irreconcilable with the decree of papal Infallibility, and strange it is to reflect that he who thus fell back upon the right and authority of private judgment should have been made a cardinal. Such words as he has left on record show that the conflict between the individual soul and external authority is unended even yet, for still the tremendous alternative is Rome or Reason.

THE END